

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 5

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

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Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Satsangs given by Sri Swamiji
at Rikhiapeeth, Deoghar,
in November and December 1997*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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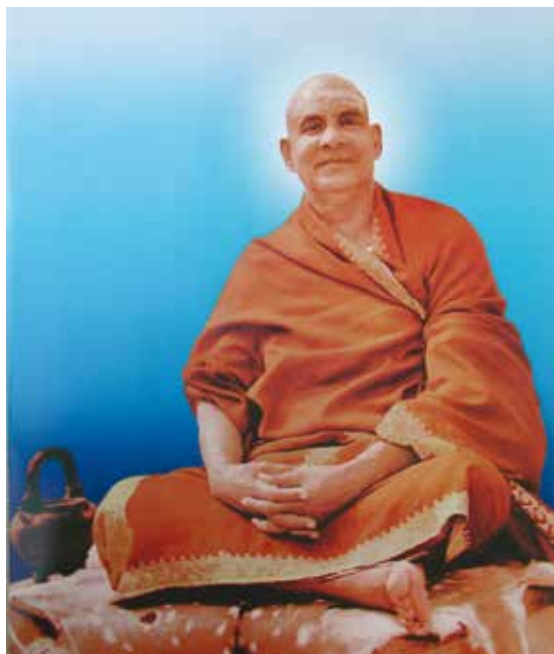
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

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Satsang 1

1 November 1997

The biggest weakness in the Indian administrative machinery is that there is no one who attends to the needs of the poorest and most deprived sections of society like cowherds, agricultural labourers, sweepers, scavengers and snake charmers. This is the condition of people all over India, not only in Bihar. The day of a young girl starts by setting off to look for firewood once she has cleaned the house; the mother walks into open fields for her morning ablutions and on the way back she picks up stray pieces of wood with which to kindle the kitchen fire for breakfast. The girls will cut grass, graze the goats, the boys take cattle for grazing – this is what they do all day long. If they go to school, who will do all the work? The mother cannot do it all alone.

Every one of them would like to study. Ever since we have come to live here, the enrolment of children in the school has doubled. Along with this, the practical aspect also has to be looked into. Nowadays there is a lot of talk about human rights in India, but until people have food to eat, employment, clothes to wear, there is no point in speaking of human rights. I believe that the human rights issue is one of historical reality. There does come a period in history when one can speak of human rights, but one can only talk about this issue in a society where the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter are easily available to everyone. Like in Europe, only after they had organized all these matters were they able to take up the issue of human rights. In India and other such developing countries, those who speak about human rights are wrong.

Similarly, there is the issue of population. It is all right to have low population numbers in cities but in rural areas, the problems that are faced are many. Low population means a higher degree of problems. The practice of monogamy or one marriage is not working. Earlier there was a practice of polygamy. At any point, a farmer needs someone to run the home and cook meals, to do the dishes, graze the cattle, wash the clothes, look after any sick person and someone to go to the city and earn money to send it back home. Making a living through agriculture and farming is not easy. Bullocks are needed, the plough is required, someone is needed to wield the plough, good climate is essential, water is needed, someone is needed to cut the grass.

If the practice of polygamy goes up, the population will also increase, won't it?

Earlier the population rate was not rising even though the practice of polygamy was prevalent. When I was a child, India's population was 30 to 32 crores. Those days, there were two or three wives in a home. There used to be at least four to five children. There used to be even more, but I am saying five on an average. Now there is no practice of polygamy but still the average is low. There is a lot of work in a farmer's home. The daily wage labour in agriculture is very expensive. They have to be paid at least 30 to 40 rupees a day along with providing their morning meal. Not everyone can bear this expense. If there are 5 or 6 people in the house, you do not need to pay for extra labour. Now this is a very big problem in India.

How can this problem be resolved?

When one looks at India, it is not to be seen only in the form of a culture. There are many ages that co-exist in India simultaneously. One can see life from the 16th century to the 21st century in India all at the same time. India is living in many periods of history concurrently, something that you will not be able to find in England, Japan, Germany,

France, America, Canada or Australia. You will only find this in India. Your government, your politicians are not able to work for such a complex society. They are only trying to ape the West. You speak of human rights, which cannot be spoken of in such a society. Until the belly can be filled, one cannot speak of anything like human rights. It is futile and foolish to speak of human rights unless there is political stability, social stability, economic self-sufficiency. Your belly is empty, your children are dying of starvation and city folk spout speeches on human rights!

I have stayed in cities, lived their five-star lifestyle and I have also lived in villages. Here when the women return home after their morning ablutions in the fields, they gather firewood on the way to start the kitchen fires. If anything is left outside the ashram, it vanishes in five minutes. A small piece of wood vanishes, a pile of crumbling bricks is gone in no time, and cement disappears in a trice. Everything is put to use.

What I mean to say is that in order to solve the problems of India, these people will have to accept the support of culture. One cannot expect anything from political parties; they are all 21st century parties. We will first have to deal with the cattle grazers, farmers, labourers, cobblers, scavengers, sweepers, snake and monkey charmers. The higher numbers are made up of these people, not of the city folks. All you city folks are of a very small number. Small numbers implies that you do not make up more than 25% of India's population. I am not talking of a caste here. I am talking of a class, not castes. If you talk of castes, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas together will not even constitute 25% of the population. I have given this matter a lot of thought and done a lot of work on it. I am talking of the time before 1956, not just of today. When I was doing research on Adivasis, at that time their number was about 12 crores and the total population was 45 crores. At that time, the practice of polygamy was prevalent in India. On an average, there were two or three wives and four to five children in each home. The slogan of 'We Two – Our Two' was

not known. By saying 'We Two – Our Two', the population has gone up to 90 crores. One should take stock of one's mistakes and acknowledge them. No society or government should say that whatever we have done is the right thing. Otherwise, how did 30 crores become 90 crores?

At that time, the average number of children in a family was five. Having two wives was a common practice. I am not talking of Brahmins and Vaishyas, I am talking about Kshatriyas and Shudras. In those days, in villages if a woman was widowed in a Kshatriya or a Shudra family, she was immediately married off to an older or younger brother of the dead husband. The next morning, she became the second wife, the family became stronger. The point I am making here is that before attempting to reorganize a society in a proper manner, the first area to be attended to is economic stability. If the income of your family is depleted, how will you be able to keep it on an even keel? When we talk of economic stability, here more than 70% of the population is in the villages. There is no country in the world that depended only on agriculture throughout its history. From the time of the Aryans until the present day, India has been dependent on agriculture, meaning that farmers make 70 to 80% of the population. However, the annual budget gives 80% to the cities and only 20% to the villages, when 80% of facilities for education, electricity, water and other necessities should be made available here. This is why there is social instability.

Indian culture is predominantly agricultural and will remain so. Any culture can survive without political systems, universities, airplanes, trains, police, but it cannot survive without food. One only needs planes and trains once in a while, but roti-dal-rice is a daily requirement, clothes are needed every day. So then, what is the biggest business? The biggest business is the stomach and then come clothes. These two are the most important things but no one pays heed to them.

Now there is so much cow slaughter. What effect will this have on agriculture?

Look here, cow slaughter will not stop, it will carry on. You people look at the cow as mother based on religious sentiments but today's world which places a premium on money will not be willing to accept this.

Is the cow not useful?

But you are not talking about its usefulness; you are saying that because she is like our mother, she should not be killed. This idea does not have an economic basis but a religious one. There are people who kill cows in countries where people eat beef, go and see the cows there. Look at the cows in Denmark, Holland or Australia; they are as big as our elephants. Their udders are like cement bags; you cannot milk them by hand. How can you draw 20 litres of milk by hand? The cows that we had kept in Australia, we needed to have machines in order to milk them. 20 litres in the morning and 20 litres in the evening. Those cows really ate, not nibbling away at little grass. Their stables had heaters, thermostats and all other facilities.

If those people eat beef, then they have every right to do so because they have treated the cow as a useful animal, and on that basis, they have every right. They have made rules saying that the cows, which are kept for their milk, will not be used for meat. Cattle meant for meat are bred separately. They are fed and fattened up from the time they are calves, so much so that they can barely move. If you look at their hooves, they are very hard because they cannot raise their feet. Such cattle are sent off to the slaughterhouse by the age of five or six.

But why are they slaughtered here in India? Is the meat being exported?

No, they are slaughtered because now everything is seen only from the perspective of money. We have a great deficiency of wealth here. The average Indian is poor. When they look

at people from other parts of the world and then look at themselves, there is a great difference.

But one cow can support one person, isn't it?

We are well aware of the principles. We also keep cows. We have no need for vegetables. Everything is prepared from milk products. We get milk as well as curds and cheese. But do you know how difficult it is to keep and care for one cow? There is a whole system that has to be in place. If things are not done properly, the cow falls ill. Here we have given the villagers more than 150 cows, but they are not able to look after them properly. Some cows injure their legs, some get sick and die, something or the other happens. Here when the cows come into heat, they have to be taken to Deoghar. By the time they get there, they fall ill. No veterinary doctors come here. When we have a need, we have to telephone them and only then, they come. The doctor comes, gives an injection or whatever treatment is needed. However, the villagers cannot do that; no one will heed their call.

We will have to change the entire set up. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that this country is predominantly a country that lives in villages. The government here should be of village self-government; the culture should be a village culture. The language, dress, everything should be like village culture. Gandhi laid a lot of emphasis on this. The philosophy of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave is the best one for India. Nowadays, whether out of fear or some other reasons, people are reluctant to praise Gandhi but the truth is that his philosophy was of the highest calibre. He has written at length on rural economy, what the villages should be like, what should be taught in the schools there. What do children learn in the schools here? When was Akbar born, when did Aurangzeb die, who was his father, who was his sister? Of what use will this be to a village girl? When she gets married and goes to her in-law's house, will she tell her father-in-law when Akbar was born?

Isn't there something wrong with this system?

Well, if the system is wrong then it is up to you people to correct it, to set it right. The first priority of all institutions in this country, especially religious institutions, should be villages, not the city. Is there any great person who stays in the villages of India for a long enough time? When I came to stay here, people laughed saying, 'What is to be found in villages?' These people cannot even give one rupee. When it is sadhus who seek alms from householders, here the householders come and beg from us; the Ganga flows in the opposite direction here. No sadhus or sannyasins come here; they give their talks in Deoghar and return from there. Even Jagadgurus have not come here. The people here have no idea who a Jagadguru is or what a Mahamandaleshwar is.

What I mean to say is that every institution, whether it is a government one, religious one, non-governmental, whatever – they must start their work first in the villages and set up relevant educational systems. What is relevant to a village? Wake up with the cows, do some farming, irrigation, cut the harvest. The teaching or education given here must be relevant to their life – what vegetables should one grow, what kind of farming should be done, what irrigations systems would be best suited to the place - this is the kind of education which must be imparted here. Apart from all this, some reading, writing, arithmetic can be taught.

Now even the education in the cities is not suited to city life.

Forget about education in the cities, how many cities are there in India? 10 to 12%. Our country is supported by the village not the city. The culture in the cities changes with the rulers but the culture in the villages does not change. If you go to any village in Orissa, you will feel that you have gone back to the 16th century. Arunachal Pradesh or Meghalaya is like the 17th century. If you go to Bombay or Bangalore, you feel you are in the 20th century. India is living in different centuries of history simultaneously while in the West, everyone is living in the 21st century. Those people's greatest weakness is that their

mentality is that of shopkeepers. Wherever their goods have a market that is where they will go. Selling wares, this has been the basic goal of western civilization from time immemorial. Towards this end, they will stop at nothing. They will instigate a war between two countries and sell guns to both sides. This is what they have been doing since the beginning.

One good thing about these people is that they respect the things that are of use to them. I was telling you about the cows. They keep cows as if they would look after a human being. Really, when you think about it, they keep cows like you would keep your mother. They have specially grown cattle feed organized by the government where the land is irrigated by sprinklers. Huge machines cut hay for the cattle, which is then dried and used as feed. The cows are regularly checked by doctors; the milk is analyzed. The milk is collected by machines and sent off to be pasteurized, then it is bottled and sent to the markets. Denmark and Holland are very developed in this field. There it is mandatory to insure the cows. If the cows die due to any accident, the insurance will reimburse its value. There is an ashram in Australia, which is by the sea. Once there was a very huge flood and the cows drowned. The insurance company paid six thousand dollars as reimbursement.

In those countries, before a cow can be impregnated, they send its DNA to a laboratory for analysis by a veterinarian. The owner is asked what kind of a calf they want. They think about it and choose a particular quality of sperm and then the cow is impregnated. Two or three days after the calf is born, it is taken away from the mother. The calf is not allowed to drink the mother's milk because they believe that this makes the calf susceptible to infection. The calf is taken far away and fed through a bottle. It cries for one or two days and then stops crying. The cow is milked separately and can give up to 20 litres twice a day. The cows there are very placid, they don't come at you with their horns. They walk at a slow pace, like a wealthy businessman. When the cow becomes a burden, it is sent to the slaughterhouse.

Rearing cows is going well in our ashram. So far, we have sent out about one hundred cows. The villagers are very enthusiastic. When we talk about gifting cows, they are eager to know when it would happen and take good care of the cows. We would like to give the best breed of cows to the villagers, but they will not be able to maintain them. One should be able to corner the market in milk production. A good trader is one who captures the market. What is the use of just having a high rate of milk production? There has to be a market as well. That will only happen when the conditions in the villages improves. For this improvement to take place, Indians should adopt village culture because this is a very pure culture.

Today there is a great challenge for government, non-government or religious institutions – they can turn villages into a paradise. Whether they are administrators, traders or teachers, this is a challenge for all kinds of people. It will only take a little effort to turn villages into paradise, not a great effort. Village folk are very self-reliant; they know how to live on their own steam. Their traditions, customs and ways of living are very good. Their illnesses are not very serious ones. They don't suffer from the ailments which one sees in cities like Dhanbad, Jabalpur or Delhi. You will not find any heart patient or anyone suffering from diabetes here.

Is it because these people work hard?

Not just hard work, there is something else. Illness goes where there is money. Why will illness and disease visit a poor man? Even a rat does not wish to visit a poor man's hovel because there is nothing to be had there. When we used to go to teach yoga in different cities, it was really tough. It was hard to even understand all the ailments that those people had. Here it is easy to understand what ails them. Someone says, 'Swamiji, my stomach hurts'. I say, give them a preparation of mint. Here the illnesses can be dealt with by using pudinhara, mint. There is only one serious ailment here and that is tuberculosis, and we are able to treat that fairly well here. People from Bombay send the whole course of medication. A doctor comes here

every Sunday from Bhagalpur, he checks all the patients, x-rays are done in the town close by. The success rate is quite good; we are satisfied. Other than this, there are no illnesses here that we cannot take care of ourselves.

Perhaps the pollution is very high in cities and that is why there is so much sickness?

The root cause of almost 70 to 80% of the diseases in cities is due to the pollution in the environment. The first one is in the air; the second is sound pollution. Sound waves also have a harmful effect on the brain. The pollution, whether it is of air or sound, has its own place but the biggest pollution, the most filth is in the minds of people. When the number of desires increase in the mind, the mind gets polluted. When desires are reduced then the mind stays pure and clean. When one goes to the cities, one is assaulted by many pressures – desires, lust, pressures of hope and disappointment, attraction and repulsion. Many kinds of diseases and infections are called frustration in psychology. These affect the hormonal systems in people. Hormones might be of a very tiny quantity but they are like a little bag of poison. If their production in the body increases beyond the required proportion, one can suffer from thyroid problems or some other disease. European countries are very affected by this. It has only just begun here in India.

In Indian culture, when we celebrate different festivals like Janmashtami, Diwali, Chhath, Ekadashi and many such occasions, people do poojas, follow fasts and other vows – this keeps their health in balance to some extent. Observing these vows and festivals is very effective for keeping physical and psychological illness away from people. Keeping the gods happy is just an excuse, the real benefit is that it is essential for a healthy mind. If you stop doing all this and stop celebrating Janmanshtami and going to the Makar Sankranti fair or the Kumbha Mela, then even you will have to organize big fairs like they have in Europe, like the Michael Jackson one! That is just a race to fulfil unending desires where all negative elements come together. There should be spirituality even

in entertainment. Isn't there entertainment in Holi, Diwali, Vijaya Dashami? For nine days during Durga pooja, there is a fair. Everyone goes to different pandals, they eat lot of sweets – that is also entertainment.

We have created different modes of entertainment for ourselves, in the west they have different modes. Those cultures will finally end or become extinct as those very same modes of entertainment, like the ancient cultures of Egypt, Rome and Greece. No matter how mighty a culture is, it eventually succumbs to the burden of its negative qualities. In yesteryears, Britain was a very powerful nation, today it is the United States of America which is seen as all-powerful. But just that is not enough. Political power is not the ultimate power of any nation. The army cannot protect a nation forever. You can keep a gun in your house and an army in society but these do nothing to ensure that a nation is safe. Politics cannot safeguard a nation. If that was the case, how come the almost worldwide power of the mighty Roman Empire collapsed? A formidable power like Greece was also eventually vanquished. The Soviet Union collapsed almost overnight.

The real strength of any nation is its spirituality and India is still stable today because of this foundation. It was on this strength that it bore the onslaught of the Greek invasions, Hun invasions and the invasions of the Mughals and the British. Now there is the pompous advent of shopkeepers, I am referring to multinational corporations, and their onslaught also will be borne by us. We will keep this culture safe. It is for this reason that sadhus and sannyasins should stay away from politics. Totally apart from it, like I am. Stay separate from politics and say what it is that you believe in. Speak up for the country, speak up for its people, do not become a mouthpiece for a political party or the government.

India is one such country where our sages and seers have tirelessly worked for thousands of years to give birth, preserve and protect essential and elemental principles like that of reincarnation, of worshiping a form or image, vows, festivals, special events, places of pilgrimage and temples. What is the

reason for wanting to visit only Prayag and Haridwar for a pilgrimage if one might happen to live in Rameshwaram? If someone living in Thanjavur experiences a desire to take sannysasa, why is it that the person goes to Rishikesh? If someone in Delhi wishes to take sannysasa, he will not go to Vijaynagar but head straight to Haridwar or Rishikesh. This is the tradition that we have: Uttarkhand is the place of knowledge and the south is the place of the arts.

The essence of this country is the village. Here farmers and labourers are in a majority and people of higher classes are few. All these matters merit a great deal of thought, the way in which our sages and seers had thought. All political parties must create their support base from the villages. Why do they seek support only from the wealthy? Why do they only go to Bombay, Dhanbad or Calcutta? Why don't they go to the villages? Forget about roads and electricity, water is what is needed the most in villages, and not even potable water. The people of India have to drink water from puddles and are still alive! Water for agriculture is most important. It is not drinking water or soft beds that the people of India need. They sleep very well on rope charpoys. Even mosquitoes don't want to come here, they think that the people here have hardly any blood, what will we feed on? Even crows don't come here; they all go to Deoghar. The sparrows have also flown away; they will return when the farming resumes.

Is the pollution of the mind created by people themselves or is it due to situations and circumstances?

The mental state of man depends on his innate nature as well as on the circumstances. The first thing in the mind is desire. There is no one who is free from desire. The desire to be married, have children, the desire for wealth and prosperity, this is in everyone. This is the nature of the mind and it is not because of society, it is a natural occurrence. Nature gives rise to three types of desire in man. Now, due to circumstances, there is another desire – the desire for success, status and power. This desire is born out of circumstances whereas the

desire for progeny, woman and wealth is a natural desire. One can see this even in animals, it is a natural occurrence.

The mind of man has another characteristic - restlessness, skittishness. The mind is unable to stay still for even a moment. The mind does not stay calm and silent; it is as difficult to control the wavering mind as it is to capture air in your fist. Arjun says the same thing to Sri Krishna:

*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramaathibalavaddridam
Tasyaahamnigrahammanyevayorivasudushakaram.*

The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna. I deem it is as difficult to control it as to control the wind. (6:34)

Sri Krishna replies:

*Asamshayammahabahamanodurnigrahamchalam
Abhyasena to kaunteyavairaaagyena cha gruhyate.*

Yes, Arjun, you are right when you say that the mind is very restless and that it is very difficult to control the mind. However, there are two methods by which the mind can be controlled. The first is through study and practice and the second is detachment. (6:35)

When a child makes a mistake, the teacher asks the child to write the correct answer ten times over, right? This is called practice: doing the same thing, again and again repeatedly. What is this detachment? Here we are addressing householders, not sannyasins. This is why detachment is mentioned for householders. Detachment implies lack of attachment. Let me give you a simple example. My father died, not today but five years ago; my house burnt down, not today but ten years ago; someone came and burgled my house, not today but eight years ago – and all these things are still fresh in my mind even today. This is attachment. I had a very big house, huge palatial rooms, beautiful gardens, a swimming pool, two cars, but my cousin snatched it all from

me, I have nothing now – this thought haunts my mind all the time, this is called attachment. If this thought does not trouble the mind, it is called detachment.

How can one forget attachments?

One must have a sound head on one's shoulders. There should be the understanding, 'Okay, father died five years ago, what's the point of crying about it now? Ten years ago my property was stolen by my cousin, what can I do about it at this time?' Man should live in the present and not in the past, which is long gone. His eyes should look forward and not be looking back all the time. Take off the spectacles, which you have placed on the back of your head and put them in the front: You fell in love with someone, or you hated someone, or you had a fight with someone, or you got very involved with something, or you had great success at some point, or you incurred heavy losses, or you found a wonderful friend, or you heard a beautiful song once, or you had a delicious meal, or you went to a luxurious hotel – remembering all these old memories is attachment.

Desire and attachment make the mind restless. This is what makes the mind move the most. If you are able to cut off all connection with the past, then three-quarters of your problem is solved. The past is three-quarters of the reason for the lack of peace in a person's mind. Is it right or wrong? I have nothing to do with the past nor with the future. I am speaking from my own experience. If one is able to cut all connection with one's past, 75% of sorrow will be finished. It is understandable to worry about the future but repenting about the past is pointless. What is gone, is gone.

That is why Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that practice and detachment are the two paths. Practice is concerned with any practice, whether it is of asana, pranayama, japa, pooja, self-study or satsang. No matter what the practice is, just one or two days is not enough, it has to be done each and every day. Only then will it be possible to see its effect.

As far as detachment goes, there is a very good method to bring this detachment into the mind – once in a couple of years, save up some money and go on a pilgrimage somewhere. Even if there is no money, there is a way. Shave your head, wear geru robes and spend two or three months doing pilgrimage around Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri or other such places of pilgrimage. This country might not give gold and silver to a sadhu, but two rotis will always be possible. One can even get tea at a shop. I travelled through India, Burma and Afghanistan without a penny in my pocket. I even travelled through England, Germany, Japan and America. I did not have even one dollar with me. In India, not just the real sadhus but even fake sadhus are given respect. You are being true, you are not out to loot the world. You have a job somewhere as a clerk or a teacher and the idea comes to you, ‘Let me go off on a pilgrimage’. But you don’t have much money, you have children to look after. Nevertheless, somehow you reach Rishikesh, get your head shaved, and live as a *vairagi*, a detached person. People will help you along the way.

Travel about for two to three months. What happens when you do this is that when you see the wide world, you see people crying, people laughing, you see funeral pyres burning, you see people lying sick in hospitals and then you feel, ‘Oh, the whole world is like this’. Your world is not any different, it is the same world. Whatever you experienced in your past is nothing new, the same thing happens everywhere in the world. Then your connection and attachment to your past goes away.

When we give sannyasa, there is only one condition. It is not necessary to wear geru, it is not necessary to attain knowledge, mantra and japa is not essential; we have no interest in good or bad habits. The aspirant is only asked one question, ‘Can you leave your home?’ ‘Yes, Guruji.’ ‘Totally?’ ‘Yes.’ That’s all, that person is a sannyasi. One who can leave the past behind is a sannyasi. When guruji gives sannyasa, this is the only criteria, which has to be met. As long as you are

connected with your past, you cannot become a sannyasi. If you remember your home a little, you think of your mother or relatives a little bit, such people cannot become sannyasis. That is why we always say that attachments must be left behind. Attachment and repulsion are two sides of the same coin. Attachment leads to desire and desire leads to anger. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*Kaama esha krodha esha rajogunasamudbhavaha
Mahaashano mahaapampaa viddhyenamiha vairinam.*

This is desire, this is anger, which are born out of rajoguna. This causes much depletion and creates cause for sins. Therefore, O Arjuna, destroy this wicked enemy. (3:37)

I am quoting from the *Gita* because this relates to life and living. The question you had asked about the pollution of the mind or psychological pollution is the pollution that is being spoken about. The pollution of Delhi or Bombay is external pollution. In order to escape from that, you can go anywhere. Come here to Pania Pagar, it is a beautiful environment. Clean water, clean air, no mosquitoes, no insects, nothing. By seven in the evening, everything is totally quiet, totally peaceful. The people are simple and straightforward. They are poor and sometimes may even steal a guava or an aluminium bowl. Their daily earnings are about 20 to 25 rupees. And that too, not always. There is no government scheme here in the villages where a daily wage can be earned, but these people are self-reliant. They collect whatever twigs, leaves and dry wood they can find, light their kitchen fires and make some breakfast before setting off in search of some work.

They don't earn more than 25 rupees a day here. They don't get more than that. They work hard, drive rickshaws and pull carts. The ashram has given about 150 to 200 rickshaws so that they can earn a living. Those who can read and write a little, they are given auto-rickshaws and they manage to earn about 100 to 150 rupees a day. Their womenfolk labour

all day long. You won't find anyone with a thick waist here. How can they become fat? They are working hard all day long. Village women are very resourceful; they have more intelligence. They are very bright and sharp. If they are not so, it will be hard for them to survive in this cruel society. Our society is full of cruelty, unjust and torturous towards women. They have been led astray by feeding them lies. Women are the second wheel of the cart but society has punctured this wheel badly.

Whether in householder life or the life of a sannyasi, if a person cannot clean one's own house, wash one's own clothes and keep the pots and pans clean, that person does not deserve to live in society. We ask all the boys who come here, 'Who washes your plate?' and most of them reply, 'My mother does it.' We say, 'No, this is not correct.' Parents are worthy of worship, that they wash your dishes and clothes is not a good thing. This kind of work is called karma yoga here. This suits some people but the majority of people feel, 'How will it look if I pick up a broom? What will people say? The son of a zamindar is sweeping?' This culture of work is not seen among our city folk but is 100% present in western culture.

But they don't have servants in the West, perhaps that's why they have to do their own work?

But even here, where there are servants, when there is no need to do anything by yourself, even here these people work from 4 am to 8pm, sweeping, cleaning toilets, doing dishes. They don't have any ailments; they don't fall sick. In fact, they like it very much. We have Swami Vedananda here from Germany, he had just come for a few days in 1988. Now he can't think of leaving! He says he wants to stay here. What work does he do? He works at hard labour 24 hours a day – chops wood, drives the truck, counts bricks, pours cement. He likes to do all this. Swami Nirmalratna from Australia, she also likes this work.

The progress that the white people have achieved has been mainly due to this reason. When *shramsanskriti*, what is called work culture in English, becomes part of the culture of

people, they are able to rule the world. *Shram*, work, is such a thing by which a woman will be able to keep her mother-in-law as well as her husband in check. If the follower goes to the guru's ashram, he can keep the guru in check. The servant can ensure the master stays within his limits. Isn't that so? If your servant does a good job, will that not influence you? Working is the best way to keep people under your thumb. Working is the best way in which you can influence your family, your community and society at large. People say, don't they, 'Wow! He works so hard from morning until night. Get him a glass of milk. Oh, he is not well. Give him some medicine quickly.' The person who works hard is always highly valued. We recognize this here. When Swami Vedananda falls ill, within fifteen minutes the doctor is called to attend to him immediately, give him hot water, medicines. But if someone else falls ill, we don't bother that much. You people also must be behaving in a similar manner.

This is something that everyone must take note of – there is a lot of power in working hard. If a hardworking girl goes to her in-law's home, the mother-in-law will not be able to say a thing. She will keep her mother-in-law in her place. The keys, gold, jewellery, everything will come into her hands. It is this karma yoga that has been given a lot of importance by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. During the freedom struggle, Lokmanya Tilak was in the Yerawada prison in Pune. He wrote a commentary on the *Gita* during his imprisonment, *The Secret of Karma Yoga*. The secret of the *Gita* is karma yoga. Sri Krishna says this again and again to Arjuna, 'O Arjuna! Become a karma yogi, fight the battle like a karma yogi.' Being a karma yogi means taking equal delight in doing all kinds of work, from the most insignificant little job to a huge enterprise.

We have created a system in the ashram. Swami Niranjana used to ask me, 'What should we do with such and such a person?' I would enquire if he or she was capable of working. If not, let the person go. We are not willing to keep people in our institution if they do not believe in working.

The future of democracy

In the coming century, there is going to be a big change, a very big transformation will take place. The way communism came as a big wave at the beginning of the 20th century; in 1917 it completely took over Russia; many countries in Asia and Europe came under its influence, the effect of that wave was also felt in India, but by the end of the 20th century, it turned completely. The same fate will befall democracy. Democracy is a wonderful political philosophy where the people elect their leader. But what really happens is not something I need to tell you, everyone knows. The ideals and principles of democracy are all very well but the actual form that this democracy has taken is something to think about. Today re-evaluating and redefining democracy must take place, as it happened to communism. What are the limits of democracy? What is the definition of 'the people'? What is the duty of a citizen? The redefining of democracy will be based on the definition of the people, not on American or French principles.

All this will come about in the 21st century. Unless democracy is redefined, the small problems that you have been talking about will not go away because people need independence as well as a stick. Yes, there is a definite need for penalties and punishments. If someone urinates here, give him a sound slap or two and he will get over the habit. Our dog, Bholenath, used to defecate under the rudraksha tree in the Shivalingam plot. I did not like that. I had planted a rudraksha tree there, placed a Shivalingam as well, I did not want the place to be defiled in any way. When he did that for two or three days, I gave him a hard whack. Now he does not do his business there. He is an animal; he understood what the punishment was for. We are also like animals; we also need to be disciplined. In the present form of democracy, the system of punishment and discipline is very weak, it is totally impotent. I can give it to you in writing that in the 21st century democracy will be redefined.

Until such time as there is food in people's bellies, they have clothes to cover themselves and there is economic and

social stability for everyone, there is no point talking about human rights. It is like placing the cart before the horse. The most simple person will be able to understand this. The second point is that political freedom can only be given when society is stable and secure. When there are hundreds of thugs around, how can this be possible? What the people in America and England say might be all right for them in their country but we have to look at the state of affairs in our own home. Our income is limited, our sister is a widow, we have to take care of our womenfolk. We cannot run our home like you run yours. We have to run our home according to our ways. This will be the basis for the definition of democracy in the 21st century because the problems in Asia and Africa today are mostly because of democracy. Your family is wealthy but our family is poor. Then how can we run our family like you run yours?

The need for this redefining of democracy will be experienced by people in the 21st century and perhaps it has already begun to be felt. Law, order and other systems are based upon local conditions and cannot be international. The political systems in India should be based upon Indian culture. The systems in China will be based upon the situation that exists there, not according to American conditions. Such a system will never work. If the government in England stops giving the dole to all the unemployed persons there and tells them to go out, get jobs and feed themselves and then talks about human rights, only then will we be ready to listen to their ideas. When the unemployed persons in England take to the streets and create problems, snatch jewellery from women and pick pockets then we will say, 'Okay, now let's talk about human rights.' Your homes are safe and secure, your sons and daughters live well and you come here and preach to us? No, India will learn everything from Europe and America that is not the point.

Our society is an open society; we are not averse to learning good things from others, but how can we adopt every single thing from western countries? They have educated

their daughters, given them opportunities to step outside the home, we agree with that. They have table manners, they sit at the dining table and chair for their meals, wear shoes when they have meals, which is also all right. Any system or practice, which is good, regardless of which part of the world it comes from, we are ready to learn, but they must also try not to negate our culture. You wear shoes and you sit at a table and chair when you have your meals, we are certainly not objecting to that. But why do you laugh because we sit on the floor and eat? Your ways are right and ours are not? When you come here wearing a tie and trousers and we wear dhotis, you say 'Why don't you seat them over there?' Why such disrespect towards us? Whenever another culture tries to negate or put down our culture, we will be adamant.

We hold the *Bhagavad Gita* in high esteem, we believe in Rama, Krishna and Shiva, our worship is of form but we do not disrespect Jesus Christ or the Bible, do we? Cultures should respect and honour each other. Wherever western cultures do not respect our culture, we will not stand for it, this is the first point. The second thing is that the laws and customs of western cultures are formulated keeping their conditions and situations in mind. After all, they are affluent cultures, they make money selling armaments and bombs. Their systems are based upon their conditions. We cannot accept every idea from them. You are all educated young people, look at the 21st century and give a thought to the redefining of democracy. The definition of democracy can be a very broad one, but the question is, keeping in mind the situation and conditions in India, what should be the definition of democracy? Many questions need to be deliberated upon, for instance, who should have the right to elect their own rulers and which people do not qualify for the privilege to do so?

The first upheaval that came about was with communism, the second one will be of democracy and the third one will be of social systems. Political systems are one thing but social systems are quite another matter. In the coming years, will the social system of Europe dominate the world or will it be

Asian social systems? We believe that the victory will be ours.

I will give you a small example. When I travelled overseas, I used to have a lot of discussions with people in the medical field in relation to the subject of marriage. Here in India marriage is treated as a very important chapter of life, many things are considered like gotra, caste-community and other such aspects. Genetic engineering is a comparatively recent phenomenon, but the subject has been under discussion and being studied for over thirty to forty years. I used to tell the scientists and doctors there that people have a different genetic make-up, which has been in place since ancient times. According to this system, there are different groups, related to the various rishis and munis like Parashar, Bharadwaj, Kashyapa, and so on. These groups were known as gotras and it means that these different rishis and munis had a distinct genetic make-up, which was quite separate from each other. They had even decided which group could intermarry with another such group. Marriage is decided in our society upon this basis. In western society, any man can get married to any woman.

Now in the West, whether it is in the field of human genetic science or agriculture, almost in every area this principle of genetic engineering is being applied, which was formulated ages ago by our rishis and munis in relation to marriage between man and woman. There are different strains of grain, fruit and animals. Now in the western world, they are conducting research into the questions of which strain should mix with the other, what will be the effect of this coming together – subjects on which we already have a very comprehensive and scientific set of principles. There are many such things, which make me feel very hopeful about the future of India and Asia.

Satsang 2

3 November 1997



There are three doshas in the human body – vata, pitta and kapha. They are also referred to as *tridosha*. *Vata* means wind, *pitta* means acidic matter or bile which is in the blood, the nerves, skin, throughout the entire body. The third element is *kapha* or mucus. When there is an injury to any part of the body, the mucus collects and oozes out in form of pus. That is kapha.

The five elements inherent in creation create or form the human body with kapha, vata and pitta and then life is infused into it. This life is something different, it has nothing to do with the body. Life is something else and the body is something else. Kapha, vata and pitta are the components of the body; they are the parts which make up the physical body. For instance,

we live in this house. The house is made of cement but we are not! In the same manner, the physical body is a blend of the three doshas. When the balance between these three doshas is upset, that is when disease sets in. Some have more pitta-related ailments, some have more kapha-related and some have more vata-related diseases. Whenever all three doshas become prominent, then that person's time is up.

Whatever food you eat either reduces or increases the vata, pitta and kapha. If you eat radish, vata will increase but kapha will reduce. This is just an example I am giving you. Milk increases kapha but cuts pitta. Therefore it is recommended for people who suffer from a pitta-related illness to drink a small quantity of milk every day. Rice increases pitta, vata and kapha and is considered to be 'unhealthy'. *Sattu*, roasted gram flour, reduces pitta and kapha but increases vata. That is why sattu is generally considered to be 'healthy'.

Sattu is mixed with water and then consumed. In one way, sattu is not household food. It is usually taken by travellers and those who journey far from their homes. They mix this flour with water, add some salt and drink it. The main quality of sattu is its ability to absorb pitta or hydrochloric acid from the digestive system. People suffering from excess pitta mix sattu in water and drink it. It is considered to be very good food.

Maize or corn reduces pitta and kapha but increases vata. That is why it is also considered as healthy food, but when maize or corn is eaten along with mustard greens, then it reduces all three doshas. That is why sarson ka saag and makai ki roti is considered to be the best food. Wheat is better than rice but is still not the best food.

In the same manner, vegetables like leafy greens, carrots, radish, cauliflower or bitter gourd have different qualities when assessed according to their effect on the three doshas. I am saying all this based on ayurveda. When you make a *raita* (yoghurt based salad) with radish, you use a lot of mustard as well, because the mustard reduces vata. If you don't add this into the radish raita, soon after eating it you will suffer from gas trouble. Like this, there is a proportion for the appropriate

use of condiments as well. Chilli increases pitta but cuts kapha. Coriander reduces all three doshas. Cumin reduces kapha and pitta. That is why coriander and cumin are considered to be the best condiments. Turmeric reduces pitta, kapha and vata and is used in many ayurvedic medicines.

All edible items have beneficial as well as detrimental qualities. You need to pay attention to your particular body type or *prakriti*. Everyone has a different prakriti. Some people are pitta pre-dominant, some are vata pre-dominant, others are kapha pre-dominant. Whichever dosha is pre-dominant, you should have a diet which reduces that particular dosha. Don't just say, 'I like rice a lot and so that's what I will eat' or 'Rotis are very good for health and so that's all I will eat.' Take my case, I don't ever drink milk because I always have a little kapha in my system. Having kapha does not mean that I have cold and cough but it means that in my prakriti, kapha features quite prominently. That is why though we have plenty of milk here, I don't drink it. Yes, I certainly have buttermilk because milk, yoghurt and buttermilk have different properties. Where milk increases kapha, buttermilk reduces it because it contains lactic acid. When salt and cumin are added to buttermilk, it becomes the best drink, but adding sugar to buttermilk takes away its positive benefits and turns it into something harmful.

There are rules which govern the intake of greens, vegetables, grains, etc. In olden days, *jowar* was the main grain that we had. Jowar, which is *yava* in Sanskrit and barley in English, is easily digested. It does not increase either vata, pitta or kapha. That is why barley soup is given to those who are not well.

Similarly, these *gunas*, qualities, are in fruit as well. Mangoes are heat-producing and also increase pitta. In Sanskrit, the name for mango is *amra*, referring to its acidic quality. It has a lot of glucose; in the hot season, in summer, it dries the liquid in the body. In such circumstances, people get diarrhoea. The best medicine for diarrhoea is to eat a little bit of mango, slightly sweet and slightly sour. After all, that is

the medicine which the doctor gives you. That is why nature produces mangoes in the hot season. In the same way, there is the amla fruit. Amla is the enemy of pitta. Each fruit has different gunas. The best fruit is guava. The iron and vitamin C in one guava is equal to what you will get from eating three apples. So, whether you eat three apples or one guava, it has the same benefit. Each house must plant two or three guava trees in the garden. Apples cannot be eaten by everyone and neither can they be grown everywhere, but the guava tree grows anywhere quite easily. It is found all over India.

In South India people eat only rice. Dishes like idli, dosa are all made from rice. They also eat a lot of tamarind. There is tamarind in rasam and also in sambar. They cook rice in the evening, soak it in water overnight and eat that in the morning. The reason for all this is that it is very hot in South India. Eating roti or wheat will only increase the heat. Wheat and maize do not have much alcohol and they cannot produce it in the stomach either whereas rice can produce more alcohol in the stomach. This is necessary for the body. I am not advocating that people should drink alcohol, but there should be a small component of alcohol in the digestive system otherwise the activity of the digestive system slows down.

In the same manner, there should be a little bit of carbon in the brain. If the carbon reduces, a person can go mad. There is a small gland or *granthi* located at the back of the brain which contains carbon. Not all the carbon produced in the body is eliminated during exhalation, a little bit of it is retained. If this store of carbon is depleted, the person will not be able to sleep but will stay awake for nights on end. When does this carbon get depleted? When a person worries too much. The daughter's marriage is not taking place, business is going down, court cases are going on – when such worries affect a person's mind excessively, that is when the carbon is being used up. Too much use of carbon can make a person go mad. Some people cover their faces at night while they sleep in order to get more carbon. There are very peculiar things one comes across in this life, in this world.

Can guava remove ‘tridosha’? Won’t eating guava cause cough and cold?

Guava cuts pitta, bile, and also reduces kapha, phlegm, it also cleans the stomach whereas banana produces phlegm and wind. This is why guava is the best fruit, not banana. As to the question of cough and cold, you must be drinking water after eating guava to have that kind of effect. Does anyone need to drink water after eating fruits? No, fruits have 80% water in them!

The people who worry a lot or who are always fretting about things, is their digestion affected by this?

When a person has worries, it definitely affects the body. There is a particular chemical which is secreted in the body if there is too much worry, another kind of secretion takes place when affection is experienced, a third one when there is anger, and desires produces the fourth type of chemical. Whatever thoughts are generated in the mind definitely affect the body. It is in relation to this that different chemicals are secreted within the body. When a person experiences fear, there is a chemical secreted by the adrenalin glands. As that chemical enters your blood stream, you will feel the need to defecate. You will not be able to stop it. This is proof of the adrenalin gland’s ability to induce action. When there is desire, immediately the prostate glands begin their secretions. Each and every thought and desire that enters the mind affects the body; this is an undeniable fact.

We refer to kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya as *vasanas*, desires. Why is this the case? What is the exact meaning of ‘vasana’? Smell. We say that there is some *baas*, smell, don’t we? Well, this word ‘baas’ is a distortion of *vasana*. When a person is angry, a particular smell is produced in the mind. You cannot make it out because your senses are weak. Whenever greed or the feeling of wanting to kill someone or lusting after some lady is generated in the mind, immediately the body emits a particular smell. You might not be able to catch it, but in the animal world, this smell is

immediately identified. In the animal kingdom, whenever a female is in heat, the males of that species are able to smell it. Whenever I shout at my dog, Bholenath, he gets up and comes near me. First he sniffs my toes, then my knees to find out whether I am really angry or not. This is a very important quality that animals have; they get lot of information from their ability to smell, but man has lost this power.

Whenever any thought enters the mind, many things happen simultaneously. I am telling you from a scientific point of view. As soon as you have a thought about fear in your mind, the first thing that happens is the secretion of a hormone from the adrenal glands, it will enter the blood stream and create disturbance. The second thing is that a smell will emanate from the body which you might not be able to smell but animals can smell it. A dog can smell it, a tiger can smell it. I am from Kumaon which is the land of tigers. We used to be told that if you come face to face with a tiger, stand fearlessly in front of the tiger, make eye contact. If you have the opportunity, certainly climb up a tree too, but if this is not possible, stand upright, look into the tiger's eyes and don't make any movement. The tiger will go away. It means that he did not get the smell of fear from your body. All carnivores have an acute sense of smell. They can identify everything through good or unpleasant smells.

Along with this, there is a third thing that happens. Every person has an area of about ten finger's width around the physical body. Though this may not be visible to us, all living beings, leaves and flowers, books of the *Gita* and *Ramayana*, novels and stories, pictures of boys and girls, everything has an area around which has been identified through photographs taken by scientists. This area is called 'prabhamandal' in Hindi and 'aura' in English. This aura has its own colour, it can expand and contract as well. This aura exists around each person.

Whenever a thought arises in your mind, the aura which surrounds you either expands or contracts and its colour also changes. This change also affects people around you. When

there is secretion of hormones within your body, the internal state of your body will change. The smell that emanates from your body due to a particular thought affects your body as well as your personality. This is why it is said that one should keep a check on one's internal desires.

I was speaking about fear just now. In the same manner, when physical desire manifests in the mind, it immediately affects the sex glands. Semen is produced, the body experiences restlessness and heat. This fact does not require to be proved. The aura which is around the body begins to change. Therefore, do not presume that thoughts are only limited to the mind. The relationship between the body and thoughts is like that of salt and vegetables. Each and every thought, whether good or bad, spiritual or material, affects not only your physical body but also the environment around you. When you visit certain temples, it feels so good. This is also experienced when you go to some homes. When pooja is regularly performed in a home, where the husband and wife do not fight, as soon as you go there, you feel good. This is your everyday experience; it is nothing new or novel.

Any thought can also become the cause of an illness or disease. Scientists, psychologists, rishis, munis and the scriptures all have the same opinion about this. Cancer is a disease that arises from the mind. Heart disease is also a disease that grows from the mind. Doctors have declared that nowadays 80% of diseases are related to the mind and 20% are related to other causes. This is why people should never disregard or ignore thoughts. These mantras are from the Vedas:

Om bhadrampashyemakshabhiryajatraha.

Bhadrampashyemakshabhiryajatraha.

Aa no bhadrahakratvoyaantuvishvataha.

May we always hear that which is great and good with our ears. May we see with our eyes that which is good. May good thoughts come to us from all directions.

Do pandits not recite these mantras every day? This implies that it is not sufficient that there be good thoughts in your mind alone. You should also hear good thoughts. When you wake up in the morning, the first thing you hear are film songs. Sensitivity in people has really become depleted! They are not even aware of the effect of such songs, they think that 'it is just a song'. They are not aware of the fact that every sound influences man's body and mind.

You must have heard the name of Swami Ramtirth. He is a great saint from Punjab who lived in this century. He was a professor of mathematics, a very learned person. His name was Tirthram. When he took sannyasa and became a swami his name changed to Ramtirth. He used to travel far and wide. Once he was in Japan and was staying with the Japanese royal family. There he noticed in one particular place many pots with different plants in them. His glance fell upon a pot in which there was a chinar or the cedar tree. The chinars in Kashmir are very, very tall and grow to a height of 100 to 150 feet, but there he noticed that the tree was very small, only about a foot and a half. Just then the head of the royal family also came there. He asked Ramtirth what he was looking at. Swami Ramtirth asked if what he was looking at was indeed a chinar tree. The reply was 'Yes.' When he asked why it was so small, the reply was that the tree was 250 years old. Now, how was it possible for this 250-year-old tree to be only one foot and a half high? The head of the royal family replied that the three roots under the tree are being cut. The roots give the tree nourishment in order to grow. In the absence of roots, how can the tree grow?

After this incident, Swami Ramtirth used to say that even man has three roots which support and aid in man's growth. These three roots are character, behaviour and thoughts. Out of these three, the first two are visible but the third one is not seen. Thoughts cannot be seen but it is the most important root which unfortunately keeps getting cut. First of all, you were influenced by the thoughts of the Mughals, one of your roots was cut off right then. Then came the British. When the

flood of their thoughts rose, the second root was cut. And now there is the culture of consumerism and money whose main motto is '*rupiya-taka*' or 'money'. With this trend of thinking, even the third root has been cut.

Please understand this fact clearly – the foundation of man's health is his way of thinking, his own thoughts. The development and growth of social life is also based on this fact. Why is India in this state today? Everyone is without hope and without means. Nobody can do anything about this because when a man's thoughts are wrong, he is defeated; he becomes a slave. I am not speaking of political slavery but moral or ethical slavery. We people are enslaved even today.

Thoughts are the most distinguishing feature in human beings. If someone does not have any thoughts, he is not human. We are all human because of thoughts. Wrong thoughts are the cause of illness in us. Today the whole of America, England and Europe is sick. For twenty-four hours their minds are occupied with only one thought: how to seek gratification. Radio, television, video, good clothes, good jewellery, beauty aids like lotions and potions, money, wealth, property, boys-girls, '*hotel – bottle – total*' – this is all that is in their minds. But now they are getting tired, they are changing. Over the last 20 to 25 years they have begun to understand this. They have been leaving their homes and thronging to ashrams in India by the hundreds. They come to ashrams here, shave their heads, take diksha, do japa and meditation, they perform pooja and other rituals. They have understood that the cause of their sorrow is their wrong thinking. The direction which they are leaving behind is the very same one that India is heading towards. Indian thought is getting more and more materialistic, obsessed with instant gratification.

This way of thinking is becoming very strong and powerful. Changing it is going to be very difficult. What is the remedy for it?

If a person really wishes to change a way of thinking, it is possible to change, but there is no knowledge or awareness

that this should change. They are satisfied with their way of thinking. If someone is content with the way they think, why on earth would they want to change it? But if you become aware that there could be something missing in your way of thinking, that there could be something wrong with the way you think, if you begin to doubt even once, if you assess yourself even once, then it is possible to effect a change.

Valmiki changed overnight. Angulimaal changed in an instant. There are many examples of people who changed in just one night because they became aware that their way of thinking was wrong. Until you experience a feeling of rejection towards the way in which you think, you will not know about it. Otherwise, you just keep on thinking but you are totally ignorant about whether your thoughts are right or wrong.

You think that thoughts have nothing to do with your state of health. Your health is in bad shape, the doctor says it is due to a deficiency of vitamin A, B, or C, or that it is a bacterial infection and you accept that. You are not aware that your illness is due to your own thoughts. If a person accepts that the reason for their illness is sorrow, incorrect behaviour in their own thoughts, only then will the person improve their thoughts. How else will anyone improve? If you don't know that there is a black stain on your face, how will you clean it?

First of all, you must examine your thoughts. It has been clearly stated that there are grades or categories of thought – excellent, average and low. The most excellent thoughts are that of spirituality. Only thinking about the welfare of others, not worrying about oneself, this is the most excellent thought. A person is considered to be the most excellent of thinkers when all his thoughts are oriented towards the good of others. The average person is one who thinks about himself and also thinks that nobody should suffer as a result of his behaviour. The lowest category of person is one who only thinks about himself and never thinks about anyone else. The one who intentionally thinks of harming and troubling others belongs to the worst category.

In this manner, there are categories of thought. Now you try and find out about the way in which you think. Many people think, 'If someone else dies, let him die; if someone else's house is on fire, let it burn, how does it hurt me?' There are people like this also in the world. Which category would you place them in? There was a saint in Maharashtra, his name was Namdev. A dog entered his house and ran off with a roti, a chapatti. Namdev was having his meal at that time. He saw this happening but did nothing. A moment later he thought, 'I have a bowl of ghee here also', and he ran after the dog with the ghee, yelling out to the dog to take the ghee as well. There are also people like this in the world. Now in which category would you place him?

Eknath was another saint from Maharashtra. He went to Gangotri and brought some holy water from there. In India we have a tradition of offering holy water from Gangotri to Shiva at Rameshwaram. So Eknath took a pledge to do this and set off towards Rameshwaram. He crossed the entire length of India and reached the town of Rameshwaram. There he saw a donkey dying of thirst. Immediately he gave the water to the donkey. Now, in which category would you place this example? Was Eknath stupid? The temple was right in front of him, he had taken a pledge to offer the water to Shiva, brought it from such a great distance and was at the door of the temple. He had certainly not brought the water from so far away for the donkey. Eknath did not think like that at all. He thought, 'The stone will not drink the water and this donkey is in great need of water' and so he gave the water to the thirsty donkey.

The last twenty years of the previous century saw the birth of many great people of a very high calibre like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharishi, Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramtirth, Mahatma Gandhi, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Vinoba Bhave, Lokmanya Tilak, Vallabhbhai Patel who passed away by the middle of this century. They were saints of a very high calibre of thought and behaviour, wise men, writers

and leaders because of whom India was freed from political slavery. It looks like in this half of the century, the character of our country has come down to zero. There is no one to be seen who comes close to this calibre. Yes, it is possible that in the last ten or twenty years someone has been born who will perform a miracle in the next century. I hope to God that this is the case.

It is necessary to say one more thing in relation to thoughts. After all, what are thoughts? What do we call thoughts? There is a sound created by an accident, the sound reaches your ears and then you recognize it. In the same manner, are thoughts some concrete things which go from here to there? Electricity comes like lightning and manifests in a bulb. My voice emerges from my mouth and is heard by your ears. Do thoughts travel around or do they only manifest in my mind? This is the question that arises. The rishis and munis have said that thoughts can travel great distances. *Manojavammarutatulyavegam* – The mind travels great distances at an incredible speed.

Nowadays scientists and psychologists say that the thoughts of one person can meet the thoughts of another; they call this telepathy. One person is in Bombay, another one is in Kanpur. The one in Bombay is the son and the mother is in Kanpur. The son in Bombay gets hurt and the mother in Kanpur feels the pain. How? This implies that thought is an electromagnetic stream. There is proof of this. There is a machine called EEG, its electrodes are placed on a person's skull. The machine can show what kind of waves are going on in the person's brain. There are four types of brain waves – normal thoughts, fast thoughts, less thoughts and no thoughts – and the machine can show the state of the thoughts at different times.

Another gadget has been invented which is used by the police. It is called the lie-detector and when you are giving your testimony as a witness, it can identify whether you are telling the truth or you are lying. This gadget captures only the brain waves. It is used extensively in the West, not so

much here in India. Whenever a witness is giving testimony, this gadget is placed in front of the person. The waves of the brain reflect the kind of thoughts that are arising in his mind, and the machine reveals whether the person is lying or telling the truth.

The activity of thought is very deep and far-reaching. One should never ignore or disregard the power of thought. This is why it is said in our culture that when you get up in the morning, sit silently and think of god or the divine, perform pooja or worship. Do you start cleaning the dishes or cleaning your room as soon as you get up? No, first of all think of things that are not related to the mundane world for at least one hour and a half or so. Even before you go to sleep at night, think of things that are far from the mundane material world. You can do at least this much to try and improve your thoughts. Then you can also attend satsang to influence your thoughts. Are you not being influenced by what I am saying? Oh yes, thoughts can be definitely influenced. It might not happen that you are able to change yourself but you will surely be influenced. If you spend time in the company of a saint, you might even be able to change. This is why satsang is especially important. *Bimusatsang bibek na hoyi* – this means that without satsang it is not possible to have *viveka*, or knowing the difference between right and wrong.

The secret of prosperity

What is the secret of prosperity seen in Western countries? One cannot compare their prosperity with what we have here. There even an ordinary person is prosperous, wealthy. Prosperity implies that one has access to all facilities. There, drivers, labourers, carpenters are all prosperous, none of them face any deprivation. How did those people manage to do this? Did they change their society? Did they change their religion? Or did they try some new experiment in politics?

There, if a company advertises to recruit 100 people they will receive ten applications. Here, if there is a need for ten positions to be filled, a thousand applications will be received.

There is no worry or concern about getting jobs there. In our ashrams we have boys and girls from abroad who come and stay for three or four years. A few days before they are due to return, they telephone some friend of theirs and say that they are returning on such-and-such date so to please find a house to stay in and also look for some job for them. When these people go from here, they arrive in their country and straight from the airport they go to their new house. The following day they start work at a new job. They have no problem while leaving the job either. Here people can't think of leaving their job. Why is there such a difference? You must think about this.

India is making very slow headway along the path of progress and development. One can say that it is moving at the pace of a tortoise. China has started off on the same road at the same time as us but has gone far ahead. Its currency is very strong now, but here things are moving very slowly.

This can also be due to the climate, isn't it? It is easier to work hard in colder climates whereas in hotter climates one works less. And then the population is also very high here.

No, I am not prepared to accept population as a reason. Japan is a small country, there is no iron, no coal, no oil. Everything is brought in from outside. They only have three things: bamboo, rice and fish. If one calculates the population there per square mile, it is higher than in India. Japan is a highly populated country, but it is a very prosperous country. One can call the average Japanese person to be prosperous. I have been there, stayed there. I have many friends with whom I conducted research on yoga. Primarily they grow rice in Japan. Even the most ordinary farmer has motor pumps and pipes; they have all these facilities. Life in their cities is very expensive. Tokyo is the most expensive city in the world.

Neither the climate nor population has any specific effect on the development of a nation. Out of the things that affect this, there are three very important ones: education, society and politics. We are lacking in education here. Women are not

educated. They are illiterate. Except a few states like Kerala, this is the condition prevalent in our country. As far as the question of society goes, it is a society which had been based on marriage. Marriage is the most important activity in a society. Once upon a time, marriage was an important activity in society but now there are many more options available. Education is one option. Until you are capable of earning a living, being independent and standing on your own two feet, do not get married. Only after the male sparrow has successfully built a nest does the female sparrow allow him to mate with her. You know about this, don't you? It is something to learn from. This should be the foundation of social life. As far as politics and politicians go, the truth is staring you in the face and there is no need to explain anything further.

The most important thing is education. Education should be mandatory. Every person in India must be literate. The three 'Rs' as they are called in English, reading, writing and arithmetic, these three must be known to everyone. Along with this, the prominence and importance placed on marriage in our society has to be reduced. Marriage is necessary but it is not mandatory. One can also live a life without getting married. The more people who adopt this kind of life, the greater will be the happiness in society. Someone had asked me once, 'Why is it that sadhus and saints do not marry?'. I replied that now the population is nine crores, if all sadhus and saints also get married the number will jump to a billion!

There are only two main reasons for the prosperity in western countries – the education of all girls and their social advancement. There is no other reason. Two hundred years ago, their situation was also like ours is today. The conditions we are facing here were also faced by them. They have made great progress only over the last fifty years because they have freed themselves from the bonds of Christianity. Christianity is a very restrictive or limiting religion. This is not something to be taken amiss, I am not criticizing the religion but as far as the question of women goes, it is very narrow and restrictive. It was at the same time that the psychology of Sigmund Freud

gained acceptance in the western world. Sigmund Freud was a great psychologist and he attacked Christianity over and over again. Christianity says that men and women should live totally separate from each other, but Freud said that this is the root cause of all the problems. He started offering alternatives to the religion. The entire western society accepted this. Psychology began to be taught at universities, BA and MA degrees were awarded in psychology. Then several new fields in psychology also opened up like child psychology, industrial psychology, social psychology.

Freud is considered the father of modern psychology. He used a scientific basis to attack the limiting and narrow aspects of religion and started teaching this in colleges. That was the time when women emerged from the confines of domesticity and they began to receive an education. Now they have 100% literacy there. The people whose children are not educated up to the minimum acceptable standard are penalized and can even be removed from their jobs. Women's education and their social progress is the foundation of the prosperity in the West. This will also be the foundation of India's prosperity. There is no other way than this one. A bullock cart which has one weak wheel cannot move. The cart that you people have has one weak wheel. Your daughters are lame, your wives are lame. They cannot go to court and talk to lawyers, they cannot go to the police station and speak with the officers there, they do not know how to pay the electricity bill. They know nothing apart from cooking and household work.

You must initiate women's education like a campaign. Not only education but social progress as well. Educate girls so that they can work in banks, become doctors, professors, join the police force, become engineers. Nowadays girls are airplane pilots. Look at the girls from Kerala, they have gone all over the world. Educate girls, help them advance in society, make them independent whether she is your sister, daughter or any other relative. They can start studying at any age, they can even start at the age of forty or fifty. Music, fine arts, politics, science – they should study everything.

I am giving an indication to everyone. I would like women like yourselves to spend less time in the kitchen. Prepare meals in such a way that everything can be ready in the minimum amount of time. Adopt the same attitude towards all other household work as well. Your children are now grown up. Even today if you choose to spend three hours every morning and evening in the kitchen, you can consider that one-fourth of your life has been spent there. Eight hours in sleep, six hours in the kitchen, how many hours do you have left? Make some time and read the *Ramacharitmanas*, read Swami Vivekananda's books, read the literature of Swami Ramtirth, read books by Acharya Rajneesh. There are many great people like Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, read books written by them, learn about new streams of thought. When you go to a shop to buy a saree, do you pick up just any odd one? No, you consider so many different things before you make your choice. In the same manner, there are many kinds of thoughts and ideas.

You have to choose which ones feel right to you. If you are only reading the *Ramacharitmanas*, you are limiting yourself to just one point of view. See, Acharya Rajneesh says something different, Ramakrishna Paramahansa says something else, Shankaracharya contends God can be attained only through the path of *jnana* or wisdom, Mirabai says loving God like he is your husband is the only way to attain him, *Gita* says God can be attained through karma yoga, the Vedas say that performing yajnas leads to God. So which one is right? These are all different streams of thought on the spiritual path. Women should also be intellect-oriented and not only be predominantly emotional. One should reflect and reason for oneself, only then is it possible to explain things to others, to understand others.

Satsang 3

4 November 1997

Modern civilization has not yet come to India. There are countless villages where people have not seen telephones or electricity. This village of Rikhia is quite close to Deoghar; you just have to go a little further away to see what I am talking about. In America, children of two and a half or three years of age know how to use computers. Primary and secondary education has become redundant there. People start education straight away on computers. Little children go to school, if there are 80 children in a class they are given 80 computers and they learn the alphabet on computers, how to construct sentences, everything. Books, pencils, slates, everything is furnished. Here we are still using slates, right?

But won't the children's handwriting get spoiled because of this?

Look here, when writing will not be required at all, what is the point of thinking about good or bad handwriting? Nowadays, literate people do not know how to count. Our Swami Satsangi does not know how to count, she does all the work with a calculator. Nowadays it is not necessary to know how to read or write in order to deposit or withdraw money from big banks. All the work is done automatically with computers. Today the culture is changing very rapidly, but Asia and Africa are still in darkness.

There are no *patwaris* or circle officers required to measure land in America. All the work is done through laser beams and computers. One can measure that the distance here is of

twenty-five metres by using a laser beam. All the maps that they draw are based on satellite pictures. Pictures taken from the satellites are very clear and sharp. One can even read the headlines on a newspaper from such pictures!

Why doesn't this happen in India?

Well, it requires money, doesn't it? People spend less money in India. They keep gold hidden in their houses. In India there will be definitely at least two or three tolas of gold in each home. Wealthier homes will have more, less in poorer ones. Gold does not increase by hiding it. All the wealth is lying locked up and is useless like this.

Is there an awakening in India?

Without education, how can there be any awakening? All the women here are simple, they are illiterate. It is a similar situation with most males as well.

Can nothing be achieved even by a revolution? Like it was done for independence?

Can a slave ever revolt? He just wants two rotis in the morning and evening and enough cloth to cover himself. The people in India live like slaves. Everyone has a slave-like deprived mentality; they are constantly trying to get sympathy from others. 'We are very poor, we do not have anything' – they keep parading their pitiable state in front of everyone. They even lie to get sympathy from others.

Anyway, the system of education that is going to come in the years ahead, when children go to school they will not be handed a slate or paper and taught to write A-B-C-D. It will be straight onto the computer. If they learn arithmetic, it will be on computers. If a map is to be drawn, it will be on the computer. In one way, the computer will become the mechanical brain of man. When you write the alphabet by hand, the command comes from the brain, doesn't it? The eye sees, the brain thinks about whether to write A or B and sends a message to the hand. Now the brain will give the command

to the computer. Meaning that man's natural brain will give directions to the mechanical brain.

Man has always been a thinking creature. Man has received two very important things which have altered the course of humanity. The first important discovery of human civilization was that of fire. After that, civilization took another giant leap when electricity was discovered. This was an incredible leap. Now a third leap might also happen. It is not absolutely certain but the possibility exists. A bird can fly from the South Pole to the North Pole in a single flight. It flies at a height of twenty thousand feet and does not stop along the way. Scientists are investigating into the question of how this bird refills its 'petrol' during the long flight from the South Pole to the North Pole. How does it get energy? In America, the whole body of this bird has been studied in great detail. This is not something that happened recently. It appeared in the newspaper about twenty years ago and I read the entire article at that time. After that, I have read many other articles on this subject.

When the entire structure of the bird's body was minutely studied, they found that during its flight it goes up to a height of twenty thousand feet where the air is very cold and also quite dense. There it separates electrons from that cold air. After all, this is the same exercise that is done during generation of electricity. Electrons are separated, that is when electricity is produced, right? When the bird breathes in the cold air, there is some system within the bird which separates the electrons. It is these electrons that are its source of energy. Now the question arises – how does it separate the electrons? If this science is discovered, scientists will be able to produce electricity directly from dense, cold air. Oil will not be needed; nuclear energy will not be required either. Scientists say that it will take a long time before this happens. They will have to do a lot of work before they can fully understand this procedure.

There are many birds like this who come from Siberia and fly great distances. They cover a thousand miles and

more in a single flight. They flap their wings little by little and keep flying. This is a new subject for research in science. Our country is still way behind in such matters. There are a few research centres in Bombay, Pune and Bangalore but compared to western countries they are nothing at all. In America, a two-year old uses the computer. Now compare this with a two-year old child in India and see the difference between the brains.

Of course, it is also a fact that political powers in developed countries can make some mistake or other. This has happened before in history and is also possible in the future. It is difficult to say exactly what kind of mistake can be made. Egypt was a very great civilization. What mistake did they make? What mistake did Rome make? What error was made by Greece? What mistake did India make? India was also a 'Golden Bird'. It is not as if India was always like it is now. After all, a country to which people from other places migrated and settled down cannot have been an impoverished place. People from Africa, North-West Asia, South-East Asia and many other places came and settled down here. After all, there must have been something due to which all these people came to India. Why do people go to America today? Because of the many opportunities which are available there. There must have been opportunities here which is why people came. In the olden days, people did not go to the desert countries. Yes, today they do go because oil was found there. Where there is opportunity, that is where people will go.

All the great civilizations that perished must have definitely made some political mistakes. The first mistake is the lack of education. Education is the most important foundation of the modern age. If any creed or country wishes to elevate their position, they must invest all their power, all their money in education. Each one must become like Hanuman, '*Vidyavaanguniatichaatur*' – full of knowledge and capabilities, very intelligent. You all know the meaning of knowledge, nowadays you have BA and MA; in earlier times there were 'shastri', 'acharya', 'mahamahopadhyaya',

‘mukhopadhyaya’. *Guni* means that Hanumanji was very capable. *Chatur* means intelligent. Not just intelligent but very intelligent. He was extremely intelligent. Which is why he got along so well with Sri Rama. Sri Rama was called ‘*Chatur Shiromani*’ – he was foremost among wise men. He was not a simpleton, he was very sharp and astute. If this was not the case, he would have fought with his father and staked his claim to the throne. An intelligent person can read the signs. As soon as he realized that plans had changed and the command to go into exile had been issued, he understood that it would be best to quietly leave. Only an intelligent person can do this.

Why was it better to set out for exile?

Sometimes it is wiser to exit from the playing field. Krishna defeated Jarasandha seventeen times but eventually had to flee from Mathura and take refuge in Dwarka. A wise man always acts according to the tide of the times and does not behave like a stubborn donkey. It is not like one hangs on since it is a question of pride. It was after this episode that Krishna earned the sobriquet of *ranchhod*, one who flees from the battlefield. Today he is very respectfully called by this name, kirtans are sung to Ranchhodji! But in those times, it would have meant ‘deserter’ or coward and would certainly have been intended as an insult.

There is an incident in the *Ramayana* when Hanumanji was on his way to Lanka and while flying over the sea, a rakshasi caught his shadow which prevented him from going ahead. Does this have any spiritual meaning?

No, this does not have any specific spiritual meaning. One can try and pull and stretch a meaning from it but you must keep in mind that whenever any book is being written, it is necessary to have flourishes as well. Exaggerated figures of speech are very essential. ‘Oh my god! He touched the sky!’ Now, does anyone ever actually touch the sky? ‘Chewing iron filings’ – no one eats iron, it is just a figure of speech to

emphasize a particular point. Another flourish is one that captures one's imagination or interest and another is one which evokes the macabre. 'Kumbhakarna's ears looked like tunnels' or when Khar-Dushan were killed, 'the blood that flowed from their bodies looked as if streams of geru were running down huge black mountains' – these are macabre figures of speech. No form of literature is free from such elements. Now, in order to use such flourishes and figures of speech, one needs to create appropriate episodes or events, isn't it? Literature essentially offers a realistic perspective, but the expressions within it should not be taken as factual or real. This is the first part of my answer to your question.

The second point is that it is believed there are some areas in the oceans which have a magnetic pull, like the Bermuda Triangle. Many incidents have taken place there; everyone knows about them. Scientists have done a lot of research on this and many theories have been propounded, many explanations have been put forward. What they all point to is the fact that there are some areas in the oceans which have a magnetic pull. One cannot say that these areas will always exist but over the past fifty to one hundred years science has been talking about the Bermuda Triangle. Like this there is a mountain in Australia, Hanging Rock. I have visited the area around it. Birds cannot fly over that mountain; they simply drop down. Whoever has ventured to climb that mountain has never been seen again.

All these things cannot be used as a basis to say that the story about Hanuman is nothing but a tale or some myth. Nevertheless, what really took place is hard to say. It is possible that it could have happened because birds have been seen to fall down over certain spaces, ships have disappeared in certain places in the ocean. The incidents at the Bermuda Triangle are recent occurrences, they are not ancient history. So you have got a literary and scientific answer in relation to your question. Apart from this, it is quite useless to find some spiritual meaning from this incident.

Could this be like an air-pocket? The way airplanes can get damaged if they enter air-pockets?

No, this is not like an air-pocket. Once even I was caught in an air-pocket. Good lord, what an experience that was!

Some people consider these like black holes, if one enters them it is not possible to come out.

No, black holes are not found here, they are very far off. So far that there is no telling how many lifetimes it will take to get there. Anyway, 'black hole' is only a theory so far. There are two principles in space science that have not been proved yet, one is the big bang and the other is black hole. They are only hypothetical, there is no tangible, direct proof.

Isn't quicksand based on the same principle?

I have seen quicksand in many places. The sand shifts and slips right inside. It is not as if this is the case everywhere. When Mahmud Ghaznavi's army came to India and was proceeding towards Somnath, there was a watchman called Goga Sardar. He led one regiment of Mahmud Ghaznavi's army into such a place and the entire regiment was swallowed up in the sand. It is recorded in history. It took place during Ghaznavi's last attack on the Somnath temple. At that time, the chief priest of the Somnath temple had appealed to the kings of Rajasthan and Gujarat to save the temple. He sent missives to everyone but no one came forward to save the temple. There is historical evidence to prove this. Kanhaiyalal Maniklal Munshi, who was the founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and was also the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, has written a paper on this. Eventually Bhimdev Solanki went to help along with his army, but Mahmud Ghaznavi had a formidable fighting force with so many elephants, horses and soldiers that there was no hope of defeating him. Still, Goga Sardar was able to divert one entire regiment into the quicksand. Quicksand does not mean water; it is a place where the sand is very deep. As soon as one steps there, one is sucked down into the sand.

Did such incidents in history, like not being able to save temples, happen only here or did they happen in other countries also?

Not only here, they happened everywhere. When Christianity spread in Europe, at that time the people had their own ancient religions. They worshipped gods and goddesses, worshiped statues, even the Shivalingam was worshipped. I have visited the library in the Vatican and read books there too. The spreading of Christianity received a huge impetus when the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian. It was this Emperor who established the city of Constantinople which is now known as Istanbul.

At that time, there was a very great religious war to promote and establish Christianity, from the Black Sea in the East up to Mongolia in the north towards the Balkans and in the west towards France and Spain. Village after village was decimated. People's hands and legs used to be tied, they were hung upside down over fire and asked, 'Will you adopt Christianity?' If they said, 'Yes,' they were released, water poured over their heads in a rite of baptism, their names were changed and they were married off to a Christian. There are three kinds of initiation in Christianity, the first is baptism, second is communion and the third is marriage. One is not born Christian. Babies are taken to church where holy water is poured on their heads and they are baptised, this is the first initiation in Christianity. Nowadays this is not as prevalent since people have become educated, they say the child will choose its own faith when it grows up.

About five or six hundred years after Christianity gained a strong foothold, the whole picture changed. The religion of Islam rose from Mecca and in a few centuries spread from Africa to Mongolia. Genghiz Khan and his grandson Kublai Khan were Mongolian. The Mongols started their invasions from Turkey and from there took over the Balkans and killed all the Christians there, entire towns were set on fire. The Turkish people are not originally Asian; they are the same race as Europeans. You must have seen that the Turkish are

very fair, like Europeans. The Ottoman Empire was spread over a very large part of the world and included Middle Asia and Eastern Europe. In the West, the Muslims who invaded Spain were the Moors. They destroyed churches, killed many Christians or converted them to Islam. Even today you will find many Muslims in Spain.

When I visited Spain, I got to know about a very well-known story. There was a statue of the Madonna that is Mother Mary, in a church. When the Muslim invaders arrived in Spain, a priest from that church feared that they might destroy the statue and he fled into the mountains to live in a cave. He hid the statue in a cleft of the cave. It was a wooden statue; I have seen it with my own eyes. When the priest used to light a fire in the cave, the soot from the flame would settle on the statue. After some years the priest died but people knew about this story.

After many centuries that statue of the Madonna was taken out from that cave. That place is sixty miles north of Barcelona in the mountains of Montserrat. A big cathedral was built and the statue enshrined there. It is known as the Black Madonna, its literal meaning is 'Ma Kali'. Thousands of pilgrims visit that place every day. There is a beautiful road leading up to the mountains. Where there is no road, there are rope bridges. It is a very great centre of pilgrimage. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, people of all faiths go and make vows or pleas there. Some pray for a child, or a job, for good health or to seek relief from litigation.

There is a similar incident that took place in Varanasi. The Shivlingam from the Vishwanath temple was hidden in an old well by the temple priests fearing that it might be destroyed by Muslim invaders. Later it was retrieved from the well, everyone knows about it.

After Spain, the Muslims turned towards the Balkans. In the recent strife between Christians and Muslims in Serbia, the Muslims are those from that very time. They are all fair and have blue eyes. There the Muslims and Christians have the same physical features, wear similar clothing and even

have a similar diet but their religions are different. They are out for each other's blood.

At that time, the Pope wrote a letter to Genghiz Khan to stop all this bloodshed. It was a very polite and well-written letter; one can still see it in the Vatican today. It is written in the Italian language. Two priests carried that letter and it took them three or four months to get to Mongolia. In their descriptions of the journey, they write that village upon village was devastated, the dead lay all around, vultures circled in the air and there was not a soul to be seen. When they finally arrived in Mongolia, Genghiz Khan, to whom the letter was addressed, had died. His grandson, Kublai Khan, had left for conquests in China. At that time, his general, Aktai, was present and the letter was presented to him by the priests. Aktai imprisoned them and only after a long time they somehow escaped from there.

The point I am making here is that destroying temples, churches and mosques was nothing out of the ordinary in those days. Do not forget the fact that in olden times, religion was an important support of the state and politics. Today in our secular or non-communal society, there is an attempt to separate religion from politics. Religion will not rule on political issues. That is what is said but in reality, when one looks at it from within, this is not the case at all. Religion has always influenced political will and decisions. There was a lot of trouble in England and Europe, Christianity was split into many different denominations. When Henry the Eighth of England wanted to divorce his first wife, the Pope did not give his permission. An infuriated Henry told the Pope that he would seek the divorce from another Church and formed a different Church which is called the Anglican Church today. After his divorce was granted by that church, he went on to marry for a second time. I am telling you stories from history. There has always been bickering between religion and politics.

After that there was the Industrial Revolution in Europe, many scientists also arrived on the scene who challenged the veracity of religious beliefs. Earlier, scientists like Galileo were

afraid of the church. Many were threatened and even killed by the church. In those times, the priests were very powerful and wielded a lot of control over people, but gradually scientists were able to lay bare the truth behind Christian beliefs and practices.

In the meantime, there was another important event. The Industrial Revolution gave employment to many. The government slowly began to take more and more control of things into their hands. When people found employment, they also started having an income, they did not flock to monasteries and nunneries like they did in earlier times. The church had spread its influence very wide but when the number of priests and nuns began to go down, who would run the churches, schools and hospitals? Then they started to pay a salary to priests and even began to accept priests from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Japan and India. The people who went from such places were certainly of the Christian faith but their culture was different. This saw a great amalgamation of many different elements within the Christian faith. Now the people from the west are not interested in becoming priests or nuns.

These kinds of things happen everywhere. One religion loses its prominence and another one comes up to take its place. The vedic culture here has become weak, no doubt, but it has not died out because it is inherently flexible and not fanatical and rigid. If you are a gnostic, you belong to this faith, even if you are agnostic, you still belong to this faith. We will not say that since you are an agnostic, you should be excommunicated. Your grandmother or great-grandmother might have worn a *ghunghat*, veil, but your sister has stopped wearing it. Has she done any wrong because of this? Our faith says that if our women discard the practise of wearing a *ghunghat*, our faith is not finished because of it. Yes, it was necessary in those times because the social situation demanded it. Now society says it is not necessary to wear it. In those times, girls and boys did not speak to each other because that was what society dictated. In today's society they mix freely together and nobody has any objection.

Our faith says that social conventions must be followed otherwise one is in a difficult situation. Rama deferred to convention, he had no choice. He loved Sita very much and it was difficult for him to think of life without her. The social convention of that period did not accept that a married woman could spend even one night under another man's roof. This was the convention of that time. Sri Rama followed it but he never forgot Sita. After Sita had left, Rama lived like a sannysasi despite the fact that he was in a palace. He used to sleep on the bare ground and have only one meal a day.

Whether someone is a king or an emperor, a saint or even an incarnation of the divine, social conventions of the time have to be respected. Society demands it. When society changes, faith does not change because it is your relationship with god. Whether the relationship is with a god who has a form or is formless, whether it is with Brahman of Vedanta or Vishnu of the Vaishnavaites, Shakti of the Shaktas, Our Father of the Christians or Allah Mian of the Muslims, this individual and personal relationship is what is called *Sanatan dharma* or the eternal faith. All other faiths are relevant to a particular time and space.

Whether you wear a saree or jeans, whether your hair is long or short, whether you speak in Sanskrit or English, none of this makes any difference to faith. Whether you say pranaam to men or shake their hand, it makes no difference. Whether you accept the practice of divorce or not, it matters little. These are all social conventions. They are formed depending on different periods of time and prevailing conditions. This is the adaptability and flexibility that one sees in Sanatan dharma. This is exactly what Sanatan dharma means – that faith in which there is no break, which is everlasting. About two hundred years ago, did the son of a Hindu live in the manner which you do now? Did your grandmother or great-grandmother live like this? No, they were always hidden behind their *ghunghats*. The women of those times were called *Asooryapashya*, those whose faces were not seen even by the sun. We have had a society like this as well, and it is

the same society which had the practice of *swayamvar*, when girls used to choose a bridegroom from among fifty or sixty suitors. There are fifty to sixty kings seated in the court, the girl comes in bearing a flower garland and walks through and all the kings are introduced to her one by one. What a free society that was!

There was also a society where a king had three to four wives and countless concubines as well. There was no law of monogamy in those days. There was that kind of society as well. Vishwamitra was a sadhu, a rishi. He had a relationship with an apsara called Menaka. From today's perspective, it was not legitimate. Yet, the offspring from that relationship went on to be the ancestor of a very powerful king of the Ikshvaku dynasty. I am talking about Shakuntala. Shakuntala conceived before she was married and was still living at the ashram, you all know the rest of the story. Her son was Bharat after whom this country is called 'Bharatvarsh.' If a country can be named after an illegitimate son, you can imagine what a generous and open-minded society it was. Bharat was illegitimate, wasn't he? He was not called illegitimate; he was called great. When he used to play as a child, it was not with puppies but lion cubs! A child who plays with the cubs of a lion, whether he is legitimate or illegitimate, he is certainly very strong. It is after him that this country has been named.

At the same time, Karna was not accepted. Karna was also in the same situation as Bharat but he was not accepted because he chose to align with the forces of injustice. He went over to the wrong side. If a strong man chooses to support injustice, who will accept him?

The discussion was about the strife and struggle between religions, and history shows very clearly that this is something that has been happening for a long time. There are three religions in the world which are monotheistic – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Just like our religion is a very old one, Judaism is also an ancient religion. Today Jews have settled in Israel but they are originally from Kashmir. Long ago, Kashmir was known as Neelanchal and the sea there was

called the Neelanchal Sea. There is an ancient text about this called the Neelanchal Purana. There is a detailed description about the history of Kashmir from those times in this book. The ancestors of the Jewish people left Kashmir and travelled to Israel through Iraq. It is stated in the Old Testament, 'I will take you to the land where milk and honey flows.' The land of milk and honey is Kashmir; in Israel there is nothing but sand everywhere and even water is very scarce. They bring in soil by helicopters in order to grow plants. That is the condition of that place.

The other two religions are born out of Judaism. According to the Bible, when Abraham's wife was not able to bear children, she was asked to produce children which were borne by her maidservant. The son who was born from the maid was called Ishmael. By a strange coincidence, Abraham's wife also conceived at that time and the son born to her was called Isaac. The Christian or *Isaaee* faith came from Isaac and Islam came from Ishmael.

These three religions say 'Only I am right; apart from me, all others are wrong.' There is no question of any compromise or coming to any mutual understanding. Under no circumstances are they willing to accept the beliefs and tenets of any other religion. They refuse to accept the idea of reincarnation despite ample scientific proof. Whereas our vedic dharma says that after one lifetime there is a second one, after that a third and in this manner, there are several lifetimes and births. They say that the Divine is formless, it has no form. We say that no, the Divine has form as well. Avatars like Rama and Krishna manifest for the devotees and bhaktas. Brahma creates, Vishnu sustains creation, Shiva destroys creation, Devi Ma blesses everyone. She protects everyone. But they say that this is all nonsense. Reincarnation and the manifestations of the Divine in different forms, it is these two principles which have been the root cause of disagreement and friction.

There had also been conflict between these three religions as well. The Shia sect of Islam has been largely influenced by

Sufi thought. The stream of Sufi thoughts flows in a similar vein to vedantic thoughts. Sufis accept music, dance, wine, lovers. Have you read the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam? It is an outstanding example of Sufi poetry. Since they have been influenced by Sufism, Shia Muslims have accepted music and dance. But the Sunni Muslims are very orthodox and do not accept this. Similarly, the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christians cannot see eye to eye as they have divergent points of view.

There has always been conflict between religions. Many temples have been broken in India. The Shivalingam in the Baidyanath temple had been broken. Nowadays people don't fight, they say that because of so many devotees touching the Shivalingam, it has worn down, but that is not the case. The Shivalingam was broken. When there was an attack on the Kashi Vishwanath temple, pandits hid the Shivalingam in Gyanvapi. When Buddhist rule was strong in India, they removed the idol of Narayana from the Badrinath temple, threw it into the Alakhnanda river and installed a statue of Buddha in its place. This has always been going on. When politics and religion go together, this is bound to take place.

It is for this reason that religion and politics should be far apart from each other. Religion is only a subject of worship. It is necessary to maintain a high social standard. We can give you a noble and high-minded philosophy because you have a need for it, but if we start talking about this party and that leader, that is none of our business. Religion is only concerned with making a human being and society. It does not have much to do with nation-building and politics. You people can look after the legislature and all that. Until such time that this takes place, the fighting will continue.

There was a law in Europe that apart from a church, there cannot be any other religious place in a public space. Things were very difficult for other religions. Now as our numbers are increasing, they are changing the laws. Many temples have been built in England, America and France. Now it is possible to conduct a community Ramlila and hold discourses on

one's religion, there is no ban on it. I know the laws of those places. The education among Europeans has progressed so much and being so closely connected with science, they have moved far from religion and do not like what the priests say and do. This is why when Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirth, Prabhupad Bhaktivedant, Acharya Rajneesh, Mahesh Yogi and Krishnamurti went there from India, those people discovered a path. They read all the Indian scriptures: Upanishads, Vedas, Puranas, *Bhagavad Gita*, everything. The *Bhagavad Gita* is found in every home. When you stay in a five-star hotel, you find the *Gita* along with the Bible. The *Gita* is not a religious text, it deals with life. It is as true for Hindus as it is for Muslims.

We completely accept the spiritual greatness of Indian culture but the economic and social conditions need to be thought about seriously. You are from the cities, you get by somehow, but the situation in the villages is appalling. If these people survive, it is not because of the grace of the government, but because they are inherently strong. They are alive despite suffering from tuberculosis. They manage to stay alive even though days go by without having anything to eat. Nobody thinks about them. More than 70 to 80% of Indians live in villages and are dependent upon agriculture, but the foundations of the economy and education are not in the villages. It is in the cities where the population is not more than 20 to 30%.

Even in the cities, most of the population is from the villages. If the villagers left the cities, you would not have any servants, no drivers, no mechanics. Thousands throng to the cities from the villages, but no one comes to the villages from the cities. You are all householders; nowadays even sadhus don't come to villages. Many sadhus ask me why I have gone to live in a village since there are no means to be found there, nothing at all. I reply saying that I have not come here to seek means. I have left everything. I do not expect anything from anyone. I do not need anyone's charity or alms. If I wanted to beg, I would have gone to a big city where people would

simply throw ten or twenty thousand rupees my way. Why would I come to beg in a village?

No sadhus come to rural areas. They come as far as Deoghar and go back from there. Nobody comes here because there are no facilities though this place is not far from the town, just seven or eight kilometres. If you go even more into the interior, it will be more difficult. You will not even be able to go by bicycle. If prosperity returns to the villages of India, this country will have no equal. I am talking about prosperity, not wealth. I have lived all my life in a rural culture, I think like they do. My conclusion is that Indian culture is of a very high calibre, but the economic and trading resources are very weak. When the governments make their budget, 80% goes to the cities and only 20% comes here when in fact, it should be exactly the opposite.

Swamiji, are you predicting that prosperity will come to Indian villages?

I tell one story again and again. Once Swami Ramtirth had gone to Japan and was a guest of the Japanese royal family. There were many little potted plants in the room he was staying in; there was even a tiny *chinar*, maple tree in one pot. When he asked the gardener, he was told that this was a hundred and fifty-year-old bonsai plant. “How was it possible for a hundred and fifty-year-old maple to be so small?” he asked in amazement. The gardener told him that there are three roots under the tree which are regularly cut so that the plant cannot grow, it just lives, that’s all.

In the same way, the Indian people have been made into bonsai. The three roots have been cut. They are alive but they do not grow. A person has three roots – character, conduct and thoughts. One can see the character and conduct but thoughts are not to be seen. Most Indians still have a slave mentality, please don’t mind what I am saying. I am not just speaking about villagers but even about the educated city folk. A slave does not have thoughts of his own, a personality of his own. A slave has no future of his own, no support of his own. ‘I have

not eaten for three days' – this is what a slave says. 'I am very poor, I have to get my daughter married' – this is what a slave says. A tiger will die of starvation but not eat grass. In the same manner, a man capable of making his own efforts will never hold out his hands in front of anyone to beg for alms.

This slave mentality has become ingrained in us. People come to me and say, "Swamiji, things are very difficult." "What is the problem?" "I can't get my daughter married." "Okay, so educate her, get her a job." "How can I do that, what will people say?" What will they say? That she has a bad character? So let them say it. They will not stop your livelihood. Let them say what they want. Why are you afraid of the world? The world is such that no matter what you do, they will have something bad to say. It will not leave anyone alone. Not even Rama and Krishna were spared. It is not the business of a self-respecting and hard-working person to live according to what the world says.

All a man needs to be concerned with is how to make a life for himself. I lived as a mendicant for eight years. How did I do that? I went into the streets. In places of pilgrimage, I spread a sheet out and placed a bowl on top of it. Sometimes I got a rupee, sometimes five rupees. In those days five rupees was a lot of money. If it did not rain in the evening, I just stayed there. If it did rain, I sought shelter somewhere. Why did I do all this? It is not like I could not find something to eat anywhere. I am an educated man; I could find a job. I told myself, a man must experience poverty. I had never seen poverty in my life. My family had more than a thousand acres of farmland, a couple thousand acres of forests, twenty horses, fifty cattle. However, even a rich man must live like a beggar for some time. He must know how he can survive in the face of total poverty. Go to some place of pilgrimage, sleep on the ground, eat only one meal a day, wear torn clothes, don't have any money in your pocket, live without tea and cigarettes – this is an experience. That experience will give a man confidence in himself that he can do anything. Then he will not be a good-for-nothing anymore.

You people are all good-for-nothings and this has come down to you as a legacy over many centuries. The Greeks came, Mughals came, the British came, and you were beaten again and again. You have no voice, your sons and daughters cannot speak for themselves. When your children cannot reply to you, how can they say anything to anyone else? When your children talk back to you, you get angry, you feel bad, don't you? If they cannot stand up to you, how will they be able to face the world? Their minds and speech have to be as sharp as a knife and that training has to be given by the parents. If your children speak up, you tell them, "Be quiet, do not talk in front of your elders." Why should they not speak? If they cannot speak out in front of their elders, how will they hold their own in the face of crooks? Someone who does not have this capability is called a slave. Character, conduct and thoughts – these are the three roots of a man. If these three are cut, then the entire race will be a bonsai.

Swamiji, these roots have been cut. Now how do we grow them again?

Change the pot, take the plant out of the pot and put it in the ground, the roots will grow again. Look around you, people are changing, girls are changing. Girls should be courageous. If you are in love with someone, what's wrong with that? Why should you hide it? The parents must learn to accept it. This is the culture of the new times.

What I mean to say is that these people need to be given a push to move them ahead. You don't like what you see around you. When I lived in Rishikesh, lepers used to sit on the streets there and beg, "We don't have hands, please give us something." I asked for some land from the king of Tehri and settled them there. In those days, one of Gandhi's co-workers, Miraben was living near Rishikesh and looking after cattle. She helped a lot. We got straw and bamboo from her and made about two hundred and fifty huts. Each house was given a goat, goat's milk is very good for people suffering from leprosy. A doctor was appointed from the Tehri hospital.

I used to go there every day, read and chant the *Ramayana*. Every day I would take a bundle of beedis for them since they had a habit of smoking.

As long as I was there, everything was all right. I did not allow them to go out and beg. The streets became clean. The people of Rishikesh also helped a great deal. We collected thousands of rupees and settled them. When I returned there recently I saw that they were all back on the streets again. There is no one to look after them. I thought, if someone has a habit, they will not improve. When they were living in the settlement, they did not get money. That is why they tie bandages on their hands and feet, come out and beg and they get fifty-hundred rupees. People often give charity in pilgrimage towns.

Nowadays drugs and all this has also become rampant.

Look here, there is nothing wrong with drugs, there is nothing wrong in eating meat – there is only one harmful thing – not recognizing the changing winds of time. Today the winds of time say you must educate your daughters. Secondly, make them independent. Marriage is the third choice. Earlier that was the only thing open to girls, get married and produce children. Not now. Today's society says that education is a must for girls, independence is a must, but the third option of marriage is not a must. If you wish, get married, if not, there is no compulsion. Now this is the law. Parents do not have the right to forcibly get their daughters married off. The boy and girl can make their own decision about marriage. Marriage becomes the parents' duty if the children are handicapped, lame, weak, helpless. Now a girl goes out, earns a living, can she not take her own decision about her marriage? What nonsense is this? A girl is a telephone operator, a bank manager, works in a hospital as a nurse, looks after the sick until the wee hours of the morning, looks after the dead, and you are worrying about getting her married?

Today the most important thing is to uplift womankind. No society, whether it be Brahmin, Vaishya or a backward

class, can entertain hopes of progress if their women are not uplifted, they will not prosper unless their girls come up in life because women are the symbol of prosperity. Men are the symbol of effort and hard work and women symbolize prosperity. When she comes into your home, she does not come empty-handed. She has come with so much and you have reduced her to a mere servant! Isn't this a crime? I am not saying that women should not work in the house. The food has to be cooked, the dishes have to be cleaned, clothes have to be washed, but she has come to that house with suitcases full of things, with silver and gold, with cycle-scooter-car, and in that very house she is turned into a servant. Is this not a social crime? Such a society cannot survive.

Women have endured untold hardships and have been subjected to terrible crimes. If a man is a widower, there are no restraints to be followed, but if a woman is widowed, she has to shave her head, change her clothes, can not go here, not do this, not do that – a hundred laws have to be followed. If there are laws, they must apply to men and women, both. One lost a husband, one lost a wife. Why are the rules and regulations different for them? This is something you must think about. The old ways have to be broken. You must bell the cat at some time or the other. Without that, prosperity will not come into your home. Yes, money might come but there is a big difference between mere money and prosperity.

At a glance one can tell that this is the house of a prosperous man, even if it is a hut. A house with money is another matter. The word for prosperity in Hindi is samriddhi and is made up of two words – sam and riddhi. When the woman is in good health, the son is well, the daughter is studying, the man of the house has a job, the wife is in the field, there is a goat, a cow, a horse, a cycle, a scooter – these are the signs of prosperity. That which continues to grow is called samriddha, and is prosperous. That is why not only money, but prosperity is needed. And prosperity is not possible without the three roots. Don't forget this!

Satsang 4

5 November 1997

An introduction to new thoughts, to new ways of doing things and to new situations is something that can alter the total personality of someone. This is why one must always be in tune with every situation, person and event, not that you are locked up in the house with the idea that this will make you good. In today's times it is not as important to be good as it is to be capable because success depends upon capability and not goodness. Yes, you will receive respect, 'He is a very good man' is what people will say, but you will not attain anything by this. Attainment comes from attributes and capability.

India's greatest weakness has been its social conditioning which keeps people bound into narrow confines. People from lower castes used to be exploited and discriminated against. They were forced to keep their daughters within the four walls of the house and get them married off as soon as possible. This is how the practice of child marriage began. When the Muslim invaders arrived, the practice of purdah began. Our society suffered a great deal. Girls could not avail of education and without education the third eye does not open. Knowledge is the third eye, is it not? If the mother is not educated, has no knowledge, no good qualities, what is the child going to learn from her? Mothers are the first teachers of a child; children learn everything from the mother first. Until the age of seven, the child soaks in knowledge and experiences from the mother without being taught anything verbally. After the age of seven, worldly knowledge begins.

Some are stupid or intelligent from birth, this is not due to the brain, but due to the environment. If our children lack

positive traits and skills, the biggest fault lies with the mother. Let me explain this to you in another way. You sowed seeds of wheat and got a rich harvest. This means that the earth was good, the soil was good, it was capable of producing a good yield. The father is the seed who endows the child with DNA. The woman is the earth and the earth must have the natural attribute of fertility. You may well add fertilizers later; that is another matter, but there has to be an inherent quality of fertility in the earth. In the same way, there is a natural quality that a woman has which she imparts to the child. Along with this inherent trait, if she also adds something else, like if she is educated, knows music and dance, knows about politics, history, religion, knows how to converse with people, is a lawyer or a doctor, works in an embassy, then the child will be influenced by all that. If a woman has attained the degrees of BA and L.Lb, is a lawyer in the High Court, can argue with aplomb, won't all that also go to the child? Yes, that is the fertilizer.

If the earth is not good or the farmer does not use fertilizer, even a good seed will die; however, even if the seed is not of the first quality but the earth is rich and there is very good fertilizer, even an average seed can yield a rich harvest. It is easy to produce a child. There are one and a half lakh sperm in one drop of semen and they can produce one and a half lakh offspring, if the conditions are created for it. Out of all those lakhs of sperm in a drop of semen, we are born from just one single sperm. That is why it is said that it is easy to produce a child, but to equip a child with the means to struggle in society with strength and vitality so that even if he does not win a gold or silver medal in the race of life, he will at least get a bronze medal. That strength comes from the mother, not from the father. The father's work is done after impregnation, but the mother's work carries on for seven years.

Our scriptures have given a lot of thought to the care and rearing of children. A seven-year-old is given the *yagyopavit*, initiation through the thread ceremony, with what is referred to as the *janeu* or the holy thread, after which he is sent to study in the gurukul. He stays with the guru until the age of

twelve and serves the guru. If he is a Brahmin, he learns the scriptures; if he is a kshatriya he learns about weaponry and warfare; if he is a shudra he learns different arts and crafts and if he is vaishya he learns about commerce. Then after the age of nineteen or twenty, he returns home and enters into the grihastha ashrama. This implies that in those days there was no question of a boy getting married before the age of twenty or so. Later when boys were married at the age of ten or twelve it was due to social and political constraints as I told you earlier.

Always keep in mind that intellect is not only dependent on heredity but also upon the environment and education. *Janmanajaayateshudraha* – a child is ignorant at birth meaning that he has no samskaras; *sanskaaraatdvijauchyate* – he is called a *dwija*, or twice-born once samskaras are instilled in him. In the first instance, a child is born from the mother's womb, then after he returns from the gurukul, he is called a *dwija*, regardless of the caste or creed to which he belongs.

A few years ago I read a news report about an experiment in Japan where pregnant mothers spoke to the child in their womb as one would speak with an adult. Whatever subject the mother spoke with the child was one in which the child then excelled. Does this mean that when the child is in the womb and the brain is developing, the brain can be programmed?

Yes, this is true. The Japanese people are extremely enterprising and gifted. Once someone had asked me in which country I would wish to be reborn. I said, 'My first choice is India and the second choice is Japan.' Japanese boys and girls, men and women, older people are special. I really liked their customs of living, food, their way of treating guests, everything. I am talking about villages, not the cities. When you talk of any country, the basic culture is what we find in their villages, not in the cities. Things get all mixed up in cities. This is in relation to society. The second aspect is the prevalent conditions. There is no equal to Japan in this regard. There is no other place in the world where the

trains, railway stations, platforms, tickets, cleanliness are as beautifully organized as in Japan. Trains arrive minute by minute and they are not run by people. The bell rings, the doors close on their own and the train sets off. There is no question of guards there. And it runs at a speed of 200 miles per hour, like a bullet.

There is another custom in Japan. They bow down from the waist when they greet you. The first time I went to Japan, I had back pain. Whoever you looked at, bowed down to you. I thought perhaps they knew me, so I responded in the same manner. I looked at the liftmen, he bowed down and so did I. Whomsoever you made eye contact with, they bowed to you in greeting, this is the Japanese custom. It is a nice custom, isn't it?

There is another rule in Japan. Primary school children are taken on tours by the school and they visit places from their district like temples, caves, museums, historical places, forests. By the time they reach middle school, they have seen almost everything from their district, by college they have seen their whole state and by the time they finish with university they have seen the whole country. Every citizen of Japan knows about their country - where the libraries are, museums, caves, volcanoes, rivers, temples, the seaside, where snakes live, where scorpions are to be found. All these tours are organized by the schools and colleges. This is the curriculum which is designed for every Japanese person to get to know their own country, to travel around, to get to know it and keep it alive. This is one of the most important things about Japan. Here we know nothing about even the neighbouring district, what they wear, what they eat. We know nothing about it, but there everyone knows. This is one of the most special things about Japan. It is the responsibility of the country to educate students about their country. It is a very important thing.

There is another speciality about the Japanese. At sunrise all the members of the family are up, wearing pajamas, kurtas and belts and practising martial arts on their roof for at least ten minutes. There is no Japanese person who does not know

judo or karate. They practise on the roof every morning. Exercise is indispensable for the Japanese people. When they go to the factory, they change out of their normal clothes, put on overalls and go to a hall, the managers and workers, everyone goes there. There they first sit in vajrasana, then they do some pranayama. Then they get up and practise some form of exercise – karate, kung fu, tai chi – many different kinds of exercise. Now they even do yogasanas. Then they go to work.

The most special custom, however, is something else. No outdoor shoes ever enter a Japanese home. No matter whether one is a guest or the master of the house, the shoes stay outside. They have different footwear for the house which is what they wear and then enter the house. Not the owner of the house or the children, nobody brings their outdoor shoes into the house in Japan. Whether rich or poor, there are always at least ten or twelve pairs of footwear. Take off your shoes, put on the other footwear and then enter the house.

I will tell you another special thing about Japan. In the Japanese houses, people sleep on the floor. There are no beds or cots. They have cupboards fitted into the walls where they fold away the mattress and the room is empty. That is why their rooms are always neat and clean. We have learnt this from them. After you all leave, we will pick up the dhurries and mats. Tomorrow we shall lay them out again. Not just in homes, the same system is followed in five-star hotels also. I was asked in the hotel whether I would like Japanese or Western arrangements. I said Japanese. When I entered the room, it was completely bare. Nothing in it at all except a pair of sandals. Take off your shoes, put on the sandals. The maid from housekeeping came, laid out a mat and made the bed. The rest of the time you simply sit on the floor, no cushions, or chairs. This is the custom there. The whole family sleeps together and also have all their meals together.

Japanese houses are so light that they can fall apart with one blow. You do not need even a hammer. Instead of glass, they use thick paper on the windows. There are no latches or locks on the doors. In villages they do not have the custom

of using locks. There are frequent earthquakes in Japan and that is why this style of building has evolved.

Each country has its own identity. In the villages of Japan, people have retained their Japanese identity. I really liked seeing the Japanese style of dress, decoration, language and dance. I had also visited Hiroshima where the atom bomb was dropped. I saw everything there, how bones melted and got twisted after the bomb. I even went to Nagasaki, Osaka and the old capital of Japan, Kyoto. I travelled all through Japan. I liked that country very much, but I did not like Europe.

Weddings in Japan do not take place in houses, but in temples. The Japanese people follow two religions. One is Shinto in which there is a lot of belief in ghosts and spirits, magical spells and incantation, the other religion is Buddhism. They also observe the last rites after a person dies, like Hindus follow. They perform their poojas while sitting down. They sit in vajrasana, do namaskara and conduct the whole pooja in that posture. There is not much difference. They have priests who are called kul-gurus or family gurus. It is a must for each Japanese family to have a kul-guru. Along with this, every Japanese person is associated with one monastery or another. There are many large monasteries with two-three hundred acres. After the last rites and cremation of a Japanese person, the ashes are collected and given to the kul-guru. He places the ashes in a beautiful wooden cask, writes the name and address on it and keeps it in a room. Once a year they make offerings to the ancestors. On that day, the casks are taken out. Those people in whose families there has been a death, they all come and perform pooja with incense, ring bells and chant mantras. Then the casks are cleaned and replaced in the room, like one would do with a library book. The ashes are kept like this for twelve years after which they are immersed in the sea. The kul-guru knows about each birth and death in the family.

The monasteries have their own schools. The children of the people belonging to the monastery study in those schools and they also conduct programs of chanting and have spiritual discourses there. When I used to visit these monasteries, they

would ask me to address the students. I used to speak in Hindi because they said, ‘Swamiji, regardless of which language you speak in, we shall have to have a translator. Please speak in Hindi.’ I was also happy to be able to speak in my mother tongue. I used to speak in Hindi and a retired professor from Allahabad who was accompanying me, used to translate into Japanese.

Today, a lot of fourteen and fifteen-year-old boys and girls commit suicide. What is the reason for that?

The reason for that is deep depression. When the level of energy in the brain begins to go down, at that time the idea of suicide comes into the minds of people. Suicide is related to the electrical activity in the brain. When a person gets food to eat and he does not have to think about it, gets a job and does not have to worry about it, gets married and there is no need to think about it, whatever is desired is obtained, such a person never thinks about committing suicide. This is the opinion of psychologists.

It is disappointment and not sorrow that is the reason for suicide. There is electrical activity in each person’s brain. There is some amount of fluctuation and it goes up or down but not very much. When it increases a lot, a person either develops high blood pressure or goes mad. When it goes down too much, the person loses the ability to think. They lose interest in living. Like sometimes one can lose interest in food, in the same way, people can lose interest in life. At such a time, they think of committing suicide. The root cause is disappointment and depression.

In today’s world, there are many countries where children do not need to struggle. What is the meaning of struggle or strife? You struggle for your life, you struggle for your studies, there is a struggle to get admission into college, you struggle to obtain a job, to get married. After getting married, your wife does not listen to you, your son disobeys you, but you can’t leave them either. Every day there is a fight, every day there is an argument, you patch it up, she pacifies you – this

is struggle and strife. In Hindi, the word is *sangharsh* and it means to rub together. Where there is friction, it is called strife. Not only in India, there is a lot of day-to-day strife in many countries. It is this strife that keeps the mind alert and awake, the mind is always externalized and engaged in activity, thinking, movement. What to do, how to do – it is always busy with this activity. That is why there is no chance for depression to set in.

Apart from this, our vedic culture is one such culture which is family oriented, the family is important. In such a culture, you cannot think about only yourself. You have to think about your parents, your brothers and sisters, wife and children, everybody. Somewhere, the idea of suicide does not gain hold, it simply finishes off. Somewhere or the other, you find a solution.

There is nothing like this in Western countries. A mother is one in name alone, she gives birth and her work is over. The father never had any role to play anyway. Go to school or college, travel comfortably in a car, collect the certificate, that's the end of that. Get a job, five to ten thousand are earned, that's that. Meaning that there is no need to make any effort to get anything. Everything comes easily. There is no strife or struggle in life. There is no stress on such a person's mind and eventually depression sets in.

There is another mistake in western culture. They do not scold their children. Let alone any physical discipline, even scolding is a crime. Children have no idea about the effect of scolding on the mind. Suppose you have never been scolded or gotten a beating from your parents. Now you come to work in my office. I am your boss. I say to you, 'You are an idiot, what kind of work do you do? Get out of here!' It is possible that you will be so badly hurt that you are not able to handle it because you have not had the habit of managing or handling yourself. There is simply no experience of what to do in order to handle yourself when you feel hurt. If the mother gives a slap or two, the child cries, does not eat, but by evening everything cools down. Does this happen or not? Then the

next day, the father hits you, the next day your brother gives you a blow, then the aunt hits you. One day you get beaten by your friend. For some time, you feel bad and then slowly it gets better. People in western countries don't know about this. I used to tell them that you people have no clue about such things.

When there is happiness, everything is fine, jump and dance, do everything. Everyone knows how to do that, but when you get hurt or someone abuses you or someone criticizes you or causes you some damage, at such times you have no means to deal with the pain and agony which is felt. That can only be learned when you have gone through such experiences day in and day out. People who have never had such experiences, get shattered by one small blow. One incident is enough to go from marriage to divorce. The woman says something to the man, he does not like it, he says, 'That's it. I don't want to live with you anymore' and they go straight to the lawyer and sign divorce papers. There is no tolerance or understanding. That is why there is a lot of suicide. The maximum number is in Sweden, which is said to be the most progressive welfare state in the world.

What is the root cause of this disappointment and agony?

Anyone who has expectations is bound to face disappointments, as many expectations one has, as many disappointments will follow. If you wish to be free from disappointment, control your expectations. If you want to avoid an accident, slow down the speed of your car.

Desires and needs, both will have to be regulated, don't they?

Yes, reducing both brings more peace of mind. This is something all the scriptures and saints say, I myself have experienced this in my life. Anyway, my needs have never been much, nor my desires. I have lived in such conditions where there was always plenty. There was never any lack of anything. Never mind that it was not always the best, and I did not need that anyway. I could manage with some red tooth

powder, even though I could buy toothpaste. Ordinary soap was fine though I could buy any good soap in the market. This might seem like a small thing but it has a strong influence on the mind. Even if there are no needs and desires, glory and greatness affects a person. It makes a person lazy and inactive.

I have lived with glory and greatness since childhood. When I reached a particular point on the path, I changed my direction. I said, 'for eight years I will not live at any fixed address, I will not stay at anyone's house either, I will live only on alms.' For eight years, I begged. This is nothing to be ashamed of. I used to get a few paise, a rupee or two, five rupees sometimes. When there was enough to pay for a train ticket, I used to move on from that town. When I got to know that the Kumbha Mela was taking place, I went there. When I got two or three hundred rupees, I would stop living on alms and I started my pilgrimages, some time in Rameshwaram, some time in Badrinath. When the money was over, back to alms. I was still quite young, there was no problem. In the summer, I used to sleep by the roadside or on a railway platform. In the monsoon season, I found some other way to manage. One does not need anyone's permission to sleep in a temple or a dharmashala. I used to have a *sholapuri* sheet, a thick cotton sheet, and would cover myself with it. Because of this, my connection with glory and greatness was broken.

The sannysins of India have had the practice of living in self-imposed poverty. To free oneself from the effects of glory and plenty, one should adopt poverty. Never mind that you are not poor, but live like a beggar and see how it feels. This was the purpose of my choosing to live on alms, that I live without greatness and glory, and still experience a sense of security. Not to be worried about whether I would get something to eat at night, and even if there was nothing to eat, there was no anxiety. Tomorrow I would get something for sure.

*Jaan ko det, ajaan ko det, jahaan ko det, tumhe vahi daehein,
Kaahe ko soch kare man moorakh, jin chonch diye tin
choon bhe daehein.*

He who gives to the known, the unknown and the whole world also gives to you. Why do you worry, O foolish mind? He who gave you the beak will also give you something to peck on.

I wanted to bring this principle alive in my life and that is why I lived on alms. It was on those alms that I travelled to Afghanistan, I went to Burma. Sometimes in a train, sometimes by bullock cart, on an elephant or on foot. I went to the Hingalajirth in Baluchistan. I visited many places several times. I was quite young, there was no difficulty. In those days, things were quite cheap. For a few paisa, you could get a cup of tea. I travelled only in third class on the trains. They used to run empty those days. You could sleep on a lower berth or the top berth, the choice was yours. Now, you don't even get a place in first class. I never faced any problem, it was as if I was living in Satya Yuga.

That is why one should never look down upon poverty. What is the state of a rich country like America? There is so much crime! In New York there is so much robbery that if a man goes into a shop, he takes one wheel of his bicycle along with him. Otherwise, by the time he returns from the shop, his bicycle will have vanished! This is the condition in a prosperous country now.

A person who wishes to commit suicide has not faced struggle or strife in life, whose life has been going along smoothly and easily without any experience of sorrow or loss, who has a lack of tolerance, compassion and understanding in his life. It is in such cultures that suicide takes place and will continue to happen. This is why so many white people are coming to India. Until a person lives a spiritual life, keeps the company of saints and sadhus, becomes a disciple of a guru, makes an effort to gain wisdom and leads a simple life, this problem will persist.

Changing your clothes thrice a day, spending all your time in the beauty parlour, going to the disco every night, what kind of life is this? This is not the life of a human being. A human

being's life is not for indulgence; it is for yoga. Indulgence has become his compulsion; he cannot live without it. One needs to eat, one needs to get married, yes, one needs to do all this, but that is not the purpose of human life. Man has been born for yoga. Yoga meaning attainment of the divine. When the individual soul meets the Divine Soul, that is called yoga. There is a bhajan sung by Mirabai:

*Main to giridhar ke ghar jaaon
Giridhar mhaaro saacho pritam
Dekhata roopa lubhaaon
Jo pehnaave soyee pahanoon
Jo deve so khaoon
Meri unki preet puraani.*

I will go to the house of Krishna, He is my true love.
I am enchanted by his form, I will wear whatever he gives me and eat whatever he gives me. Our bond of love is ancient.

Mira has called her love 'an ancient love.' In reality, that love existed from the time of Radha. Radha reincarnated as Mira. When the mind unites with the Divine, whether it is in the form of the *aradhya* or the one who is worshipped by you husband, brother, swami, mother or father, that is when the purpose of human life is fulfilled. There is nothing to be found in riches and wealth.

*Man laago mero yaar fakiri mein
Jo sukh paaoon ram bhajan mein
So sukh nahi ameeri mein.
Haath mein kundi, bagal mein sontha
Charon disi jaagiri mein.*

My mind is absorbed in mendicancy. The joy I find in singing the lord's name is not to be found in the greatest wealth. A bowl in one hand and a staff in the other, I am the master of all I survey.

There is a lot of poverty in India, that is why the crime rate is also low and so is the suicide rate. Here man struggles to improve his life. He is improving it day by day. In western countries one does not need to do anything, just indulge oneself, that's all. The effect of indulgence is illness. This is why great people like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirth, Swami Sivananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Krishnamurti and Acharya Rajneesh made such a huge impact on the West. After coming into contact with the saints and savants of India, people realized that there is something missing, there is some weakness in their culture and religion. They throng to India in large numbers, stay in ashrams and dharmashalas, eat dal-roti-rice; they don't get meat or drink but they are very happy with this.

Rukmini Mangalam

Good samskaras will have to be instilled in the children here. Otherwise they will sing obscene songs on Holi, play film songs during devi pooja, only this kind of thing will be going on. One cannot forcibly put a stop to it, children have to understand for themselves what is right and wrong. They should have the understanding about what kind of songs they should be singing when there are mothers and sisters around. Society has to rise a little higher for this to happen.

The Jhoolan festival is very good for this area; people come from many villages. They will also come for Sita Kalyanam. If all goes well, then we will also celebrate Rukmini Mangalam. People in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar do not know about Rukmini Mangalam, but in the South of India, they all know about it. Rukmini Mangalam means the wedding of Rukmini, the abduction of Rukmini. Krishna came and stole Rukmini away, didn't he? We will also do it here, bring a chariot and run away with her. This will create curiosity in the minds of the villagers about who was Rukmini. Was she a form of Lakshmi or was Radha a form of Lakshmi? Who was Krishna? What is an avatar? Most village folk are naturally inclined towards religion, they just need some information and some guidance, that's all.

Satsang 5

*6 November 1997,
with participants of the Sannyasa Course, Munger*



In Thailand those who follow the Buddhist faith spend at least fifteen days in a monastery and live a monk's life. Whether he is a king or commoner, a millionaire or a farmer, this is the tradition for everyone. They get a hut for fifteen days, a mat is laid out on the ground, they receive a cloth, a bowl and a glass. That is all, nothing else. They all have to shave their heads and wear ochre robes. It is just one garment which is draped from head to foot. In the morning at ten o'clock, they take the cloth and pot, and go out. They seek alms from five homes in the village; they get a spoonful of rice from each home. It is eaten sitting under a tree, the bowl is washed and they return to their hut and place the bowl upside down

outside the hut to indicate that they are not hiding anything inside. During their stay in the monastery, non-vegetarian food, smoking and so on, is not allowed.

Thailand is still ruled by a king and while they are princes, they also have to go to the monastery. There are separate monasteries for women. I have spent time in Thailand and lived like a mendicant. You people have experienced sannyasa life in Munger for some time, in the same way fifteen days to a month of living sannyasa life has a positive influence on one's householder life. Householders do many things which are not really necessary. It would be quite alright if they did not do them, but since everyone else does it, they also go along.

Can we stay on with you after the sannyasa course and do karma yoga?

I do not require disciples and followers. I live alone. Swami Niranjan needs karma yogis, not me. All of you must return to your homes and look after things there properly, and make arrangements to adapt to the new age. The culture of the 16th century, the society of the 17th century, the ways of the 18th century and the science of the 20th century, all these different things cannot co-exist today. When the weather changes, the way you dress changes; similarly, when the times change, society has to change along with it. Today the world is not dependent on society and social relationships. This might be the case with you, I accept that, but in developed countries it is not so. There the basis of life is achievements and success. That is a society of achievers and achievements.

What are your achievements? What have you achieved on the spiritual path and on the material path? It is not enough that the family gets along well, the daughter is married at the appropriate time, the son has a job and looks after you in your old age. This kind of a society is not going to go on for long. As time goes on it will fall apart: The son settles somewhere far away, he will make his home in Bangalore, you can keep living in your house in Bhagalpur.

This is an age of achievements. Even you think about achieving things, don't you? Your ideas are predominantly about achieving something. Then why don't you reorganize your society and your family in the same manner. Why don't you change society? Why don't you change the nature of your relationship with your children and your wife? The kind of relationship that existed between parents and daughters in the 16th century is what you want to have even today. The girl has come of age, get her married, see the face of your grandchild – these are ideas of the 16th century, not of the 20th century and certainly not of the 21st century. Those who think like this in the 21st century will land in the mud; they will end up leading lives of poverty. This is why India is still poor.

Everyone wants success and wants to attain something. Attainment means to obtain something. You want to laugh and you also want to sulk, now both cannot be done at the same time. You wish for a family system that belongs to 16th or 17th century and you also wish to progress. This is not possible. I will give you a small example. Why is there so much progress and prosperity in America? You are all well-read people here. You know that most of the people in America are not native to that land. They have gone to America from countries like England, France, Greece, Italy, Spain. People have gone from here also and from China and Japan as well. When they went there, did they take their wives and children along? No, they went alone, the families were left behind. The menfolk went there and set up new homes for themselves. If they had gone with their families, they would be in the same state that you are in. The son does not study, cannot find a job, your hair turns grey worrying about getting your daughter married. The biggest obstacle in our material progress is the way we think about our society.

Your daughters and sisters barely come of age when they go off to their in-law's house. They do not earn anything there, just go there and sit like white elephants. Whether you take offence to this or not, it is the truth. Yes, in earlier

times marriage was the only path open to girls. There was nothing else that they could do, but today they have two more paths open to them. Higher education is one and the other is self-reliance. Self-reliance means being able to depend upon oneself and not on your parents. Boys and girls should have confidence in themselves. Tell your children when they turn fifteen, sixteen years of age, 'Go out, son. The whole wide world is out there, go out and earn a living. If you are able to save any money, send some home and if not, stay there, we will manage our lives in the village here.' This does not happen. They end up squabbling amongst each other like little puppies. Husbands and wives fight, fathers and sons fight, brothers and sisters fight, uncles and nephews fight and life just goes by. Legal matters drag on for twenty, thirty years. This is your life.

All of you who are going to return after the sannyasa course, keep one thing in mind – each person makes his own destiny, nobody is dependent on anyone else. You and your wife did not come into this world together and you will not leave it together either. Even twins don't leave together, even though they were born at the same time. Everyone has their own destiny, their own fate. Seek out your fate, that is one kind of sannyasa as well. If leaving your home, shaving your head, serving the guru is one kind of sannyasa, going out into the world and making a life for yourself, achieving something there is also another kind of sannyasa life. Those people who left England and went to America, they were also sannyasis from one point of view. Christopher Columbus left Spain and sailed the seas for six months, then landed in America. Was he not also a sannyasi? One who leaves home is a sannyasi, one who stays at home is a householder, a grihastha.

This is not all. There is something else that has to be considered. A tree derives its nourishment from its roots and if they are cut, the tree stays stunted, in the same way, a man has three roots – character, conduct and thought. What does character mean? One person is a hooligan and another is a good man. One is a coward, another person is brave and is

not afraid of anyone. This is character. The second root is conduct, the way in which you behave with other people, and the third root is thought, which is not visible.

If these roots are cut, you will become a bonsai. Bonsai is a style of gardening in Japan where even a banyan tree stays only a foot and a half tall. No matter how big a tree is meant to be, if you cut its main roots when it is small and plant it in a pot, place it in a room, it will not die but it will not grow either. This is the condition of Indians; they won't die but they won't grow either. We may well recite poems like:

Greece, Egypt, Rome – all these civilizations died out,
But our presence still persists.

There is something about us so that our identity does
not die.

Our identity might not die out, but it does not grow either. The minute a girl is born, a stamp is put on her 'She has to be married off'. When a son is born, a stamp is put on him, 'He will perform my last rites'. What an amazing thing, this bonsai society! The day a son is born the parents think that now there is someone who will light their funeral pyre and observe the last rites. The minute a girl is born all they think about is getting her married. Change this outdated and obsolete mind-set. The day a son is born, think that God has given you raw material which you can shape in to greatness; present a new Einstein, Newton, Gandhi, Vivekananda, Ramtirth or Rabindranath Tagore to the world. Whether you have a son or a daughter, both are equal, do not see any difference between them. Don't think that the one to perform my last rites and take my lineage forward has been born. That is all nonsense. Does a lineage progress like this? If a lineage is made by having sons, how many have been made until now?

I will tell you about a historical incident to give you a perspective on this issue. It is possible that some amongst you might have heard about it, though perhaps even people from Bihar are not aware of it. There was a very learned and knowledgeable person by the name of Vachaspati Mishra in

North Bihar. His wife's name was Bhamati. She did not have children. When she used to go to fetch water from the well, her companions would say to her, "You have been married for so long but still you have no children." Bhamati used to feel very bad about this.

Very hesitantly and full of fear, she revealed her heartfelt feelings to her husband. He said to her, "Even if you presume that you do have a son, what is the guarantee that he will take your lineage forward? Ravana had one lakh sons and even more grandchildren, despite that there was no one left alive to light his funeral fire. However, since you have expressed this wish, I will certainly give you something to carry your lineage forward." During that period, Vachaspati was writing his commentary on the first four sutras on the *Brahmasutras*. He named that commentary 'Bhamati Tika.' Today if you ask any professor of philosophy from Oxford or Cambridge about who Bhamati was, who Vachaspati was, they will all tell you the story that I have just told you.

A lineage is carried forward through *vidya*, wisdom or knowledge. Did Bhamati's lineage live on or not? Today it is ages since she died, yet far away from the land of Mithila, in America, England, Germany and Japan knowledgeable and learned people know about Bhamati. Now, if she did manage to produce a son, would that be remembered by anyone? That is why I am saying that today lineage is carried forward through knowledge and not by sons. Newton was such a great scientist. What is his lineage or legacy? The theory of gravity. What is Einstein's family line? Nobody even knows the names of his children, but everyone knows about the theory of relativity and nuclear science. Those scientists working in the field of nuclear research and taking it forward are the true descendants of Einstein who carry his name forward.

The real meaning of sannyasa

The prevalent ideas on sannyasa in our country have been that a sannyasi is free from social ties. Societal laws are not applicable to them. No matter how and where they live, all

paths are free and open to them. They are free to practise whatever form of yoga they are capable of. These ideas are not entirely correct. The most important duty of a sannyasi is not to live for oneself, but to live for others. The day you take sannyasa, you have to make a sankalpa in your mind, 'From this day forth, I will live for myself only to the extent that it is absolutely necessary. Apart from that, my intellect, my mind, my body, my wealth, my wisdom, my attainments, my capabilities – they are all for others, not for me.' A grihastha or householder takes a sankalpa for himself, his wife and children, his brethren, all his energy is devoted to that. A sannyasi only uses the bare minimum for his personal needs, all the rest is for others. If he gets two lakhs of rupees, he will keep five thousand for his expenses and give the rest to others.

The larger portion of everything in a sannyasin's life should be for others. Before such a feeling manifests within, no one should take sannyasa. If you think that by taking sannyasa you will become something or achieve something, that is incorrect. If you aspire to become a guru, have a big ashram, wish that people place garlands as huge as an elephant's trunk around your neck, wash your feet, worship you, it would be better that you do not take sannyasa. A sannyasin should think about what it is that society needs today: if yoga is the need, we will teach yoga or we will open a charitable hospital and treat people without charging any money, we will start an orphanage where we can look after children who have no one to care for them.

That is exactly what I did. My basic foundation has been of Vedanta. I have not read a single text book on yoga until today. Neither in English, nor Sanskrit. I have read all the commentaries Shankaracharya wrote on Vedanta, all Ramanujacharya's commentaries, several commentaries written by many learned scholars, all written in Sanskrit. I speak Sanskrit, Hindi and English fluently. My mother tongue is Sanskrit, but I chose English. I left Vedanta and chose yoga. Why? I knew that in today's market, it is yoga which will sell,

not Vedanta. In order to be successful, one must market the goods according to the prevalent trend, right? Do woollen clothes sell during the summer? Today nobody understands Vedanta. Why? You have a stomach ache, backache, pain in the knees, your mind is disturbed, you suffer from asthma, you have diabetes. All the people suffer from physical and mental ailments – and yoga has the remedy for this.

In 1968 I went on my first world tour. I spent five months studying all the places and found out what would sell in the world. I did what is called market research in English. My first stop was Singapore. I did not arrive at any decision there. The next place I went to was Australia. There I decided upon hatha yoga. Asana and pranayama, that's all, just these two. By the time I got to America, my mind was firm about one thing: Do not speak about anything other than yoga. Don't speak about dharma, do not speak about Vedanta, don't talk about Brahman-Atman, only speak about asana and pranayama, talk about neti, dhauti and basti, nothing else.

I had never studied about these things, but I started to learn about them. As I began speaking, my speech opened up, Saraswati came to reside in my voice, whatever I had spoken about yoga is considered seminal and authoritative by people. After taking sannyasa, every sannyasi must start to think like this, they should make a sankalpa about what they must do. Only then will they come to know what it is that society and people of the 21st century need. In 1968 when I conducted my market research, I found out about asana-pranayama. When I went out in the 1970s I found that the market had changed. People wanted to know about dhyana or meditation, kundalini, ida, pingala, sushumna, chakras and such things. I started speaking about these subjects. When I found that people were enquiring about tantra, I started discussion on tantra.

The world is a market and one must stock goods in the store depending on the market. Will asana-pranayama do also for the 21st century? Or will people ask you about tantra? Will they have questions about kundalini? It is possible that they

might start asking about Vedanta, what is the atma, what is Brahman? Then what will you do? Will you tell them that you have only learned about asana-pranayama from your guru and that this is all you are going to teach? In that case, you will just have to make a small hut for yourself and sit down somewhere quietly.

Give society what it needs. In 1956 I travelled all around Gujarat, Patan, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Porbandar. I went everywhere. In those days I did not teach yoga, I used to hold eye camps. I used to perform operations on thousands of people for free. I am very good at the art of collecting money. I used to gather sufficient funds and then hold free eye camps, organize seminars, give lectures on Vedanta. This is before the Munger ashram was set up. I used to go from Rishikesh on behalf of my guru. I used to perform cataract operations in the eye camps. There was myself and Dr Adhvaryu with me. He is in Bhimnagar now. Bhimnagar is a little distance away from Rajkot, where I was given ten lakhs of rupees by a businessman. You can make your own assessment of what the value of ten lakh rupees was in those days. I used that money to open an eye hospital, Sivananda Eye Hospital. It is still functioning today and that is where Dr Adhvaryu stays.

Sannyasins receive a lot of respect in Gujarat. Not just in big cities like Ahmedabad, but in small towns and villages too. There are many ashrams of sannyasins along the River Narmada. Many people from Gujarat take sannyasa and a lot of sannyasins from other places go there as well. There are many sannyasins from the Nathpanth or sect, Gorakhpantis, who are also known as *Kaanphala*, in Gujarat. There is another very powerful sect in Gujarat, Swaminarayan. They have a huge influence all over Gujarat. There are also many Jains and Jain institutions, but most of all vaidic dharma receives a lot of respect. There are many well-known Ramayanis who give discourses on the *Ramayana*. Morari Babu is from Gujarat and so is Kankeshwari Devi. The founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, was also from the Kathiawar district of Gujarat.

Apart from Gujarat, South India has many sannyasins from Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. There are only few from Bihar and Punjab. Almost zero from Madhya Pradesh, nothing special. Many people from Bengal have also taken to sannyasa. Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Prabhupad Bhaktivedanta, Anandamayee Ma, all of them were from Bengal. Bengal has contributed a lot towards the sannyasa tradition. There has not been any outstanding sannyasi from Bihar. You will find many mendicants playing the sarangi but no one of the calibre of Swami Vivekananda or Aurobindo. People in large numbers also took sannyasa in Orissa. If you go to any ashram, you will always find many people from two groups, one group is foreigners and the other group are people from Orissa.

The best path – *paramartha*

As people are becoming more and more involved in objects of luxury, comfort and indulgence, they are also expressing a curiosity and interest in yoga. Today there is a lot of stress and disquiet in the minds of people. Despite not having the least interest in yoga, as per the instructions of my guru, I propagated yoga. My Guruji said to me, “You are richly endowed with outstanding qualities, go out and spread the message of yoga in society.” It was only on his word that I picked up this gauntlet. I have always liked working for others, feeding someone, getting someone married, giving medicine to someone, this is my nature. I used to do all this in Rishikesh also. I managed to get some land from the kingdom of Tehri and helped to settle people suffering from leprosy there. I built about two hundred huts, made arrangements for their food and medicine. This is what I used to do.

I believe that man’s greatest responsibility is *paramartha*, to do good for all. Only a coward confines himself to selfishness. Such a person only thinks about himself, ‘Who knows? What if I die? Who will care for me when I get old? Suppose I become blind? I must have a son.’ A man who is unafraid does not look only at his own selfish needs, he thinks, ‘I will be of use

to others. At the most what will happen? I might go blind, I might die but then everyone has to die sometime or the other, little earlier or later, how does it matter?’

I have always liked to work for the benefit of others. Since I have come to stay here, these are the thoughts going through my mind: to whom should a cow be given, who needs a handcart, who requires a rickshaw, who needs medicines, which house is stricken with poverty? How will I find out about all this, I don’t go out? Yet this is what keeps on revolving in my mind: how can I find out who is suffering, how do I find out what help I can give them? If I find out that this particular family is starving, I will definitely help them.

The first duty of man’s life is to be of use to others. Today I do not like yoga, Vedanta, dharma, they all seem useless. Unless one can be of help to another, all dharma is of no use, yoga is of no use. I taught yoga because that was my guru’s mandate. I did not create the Munger ashram for myself. We have many ashrams like Munger. There is an ashram in Australia which is bigger than the one in Munger. In South America they go from one ashram to another, not by car but by helicopter. They are spread out so far and wide. I was not at all interested in all these things, I did it only based on my guru’s instructions. My only interest is, ‘God! Somehow or the other, please let me know how I can help people. To which girl can I give a sari, which boy can I give money for studies, which poor person can I build a house for?’ A man is a man only when he is of use to another, otherwise he is a mere animal. Whether you are a sadhu or a householder, rich or poor, the money you have is neither yours nor belongs to your father; it is for the people. Society has given you food, clothes, security, everything, but what have you given back to society?

Today this is my philosophy. The mandate given to me by my guru to propagate yoga was completed in 1983 and I handed it over. Now I neither give lectures nor do I teach yoga. Yoga is not my creed; neither is Vedanta or dharma. I only believe in one thing. As long as I am alive, my body, my

mind, my belongings must be of use for people, they must benefit from it. Rivers always give, the wind is forever giving, even God always gives. They are paramarthis. Like them, one who is of use to others, who helps someone, is a human being.

*Taruvar phal nahimkhaathai, nadinasanchaineer;
Paramarthkekaaranesadhundharashaveer.*

The tree does not eat its own fruit; neither does the river drink of its waters. It is for the welfare of others that the sadhu has taken birth.

Before they die, each person must spend their earnings on the welfare of others and not leave it for their children. Otherwise the children become weak. You might not agree with this because you think differently. All your life you have thought about how you can help your children, not about what good you can do for others. The day you start thinking about others, your society will transform overnight. This is the truth. What kind of person is he who does not live for others? A sannyasin's way of thinking must be predominantly about doing good for others, not dominated with selfish thoughts. If sannyasins become selfish then Hari Om Tat Sat, the world will go to the dogs.

What is your advice to us?

There is a lot that you can do, but you have to search for your own path. Whether you teach yoga or work for the welfare of others, you have to find the path. You have produced one child and then you spend the rest of your life worrying about it, that's no good. What kind of a life is that? All your life that child will be rolling around in your head like a pebble. You must also think about others. You all have lived a full life, had your fill of food and drink, earned a lot, experienced joys and sorrows. Now you must think for yourself about what you need to do. Make an attempt to wipe the tears of others, help others set up a home. Try and help to educate a boy or girl. Imagine that you have another three or four children.

And in the way you inquire about your child first thing in the morning, 'Are you well? I hope you are not sick,' in the same manner ask someone else too, 'What is the matter? Is everything all right?' Try to relate to strangers as if they were your own family.

When somebody thinks about others, the world disregards their negative qualities. A few months ago, when Princess Diana of England died, people gave her so much respect. Why? She had given away all her clothes, shoes, all her wealth to social service organizations. She went herself to Africa, South America and many countries in Asia and helped to promote the activities of these organizations. She gave donations to more than one hundred charities in London itself. After all, she was a princess and did not lack of anything. She thought, why to spend money on indulging oneself, it was better to give it for social service. After all, the money belongs to the people. She gave it all away. A person who is helpful to others, nobody pays attention to their drawbacks.

Paro apaavanthhaharpai, kanchantajaina koi – If your gold ring falls into the toilet, what will you do? Will you flush it down? No, you will retrieve it. Anything that has good qualities is valuable; a person who is beneficial to others, the world adores. Do you people have any idea how much love and respect was given to Diana? Thousands of pounds' worth of flowers were offered in her memory. The song which was written for her 'Candle in the Wind' has had the maximum buyers in history. The famous singer, Elton John, sang that song at her funeral service and in a few weeks, all the cassettes were sold out. All that money was donated to charity.

Take another example, King Bharat, after whom this country has been named. History says that the foundation of democracy in this land was laid by King Bharat. He did not leave his kingdom to his sons, but left it to a committee. Who was Bharat? He was born out of wedlock; he was not a legitimate son. According to vedic dharma, he was an illegitimate child. Who was his mother? Shakuntala, the daughter of Menaka and Vishwamitra. Their marriage was not

properly solemnized either, there was no giving-away of the bride, no pandits or Brahmins conducted the ceremonies and proclaimed them man and wife. Nothing like that happened. Menaka seduced Vishwamitra and Shakuntala was born from that union. Menaka left Vishwamitra after that and Shakuntala was brought up by Rishi Kanva. This is Bharat's background. Despite coming from such a background, millions of people of this country have given him so much respect. Not just respect, this country has been named after him. Why? Because when he was a little child, Bharat did not play with dolls and puppies, he gambolled with lion cubs. A child who plays with lions and cobras is surely someone special. An ordinary person cannot do this. Bharat was an extraordinary child.

There are many such examples in history, I am just giving you one or two. Anyone who works for the good of others is revered like a god by people. Pay careful heed to this fact. Anyone who dedicates his life to the service of others is held in very high esteem like Rishi Dadhichi, King Shibi, King Ratnadev, who used to say:

*Na tvahamkaamayeraajyamnaswargamnapunarbhavam,
Kaamayedukhhataaptanaampraaninaamaartinaashanam.*

Oh god, I do not wish for a kingdom. I do not aspire to attain heaven. So much so that I do not even wish for moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. If there is anything that I wish for it is just this – to be able to successfully take away the sorrow from those who suffer.

This was King Ratnadev's prayer. The world believes in one thing – the *annadata*, the one who gives food. Do not forget this. The annadata is recognized by a snake, an animal and, of course, by human beings. This has been my feeling, that 'how can I be of help to others?' If this is what we wish to do, we must also make ourselves capable of doing so. It is a very good thing to wish to help others, it is a very good desire, but it is not enough to just want it. You also have to learn how

to make yourself capable in order to fulfil this wish. Do not think that it is only with money that one can do things. No, of course money is necessary but it is not everything.

Thoughts on the 21st century

Our greatest focus and attention is on women's education. I believe that unless women are endowed with all possible capabilities, no society can make progress, whether it is a society of the rich or the poor. Women will have to emerge from the confines of home and hearth. The development of the nation is not possible without this. The world is moving ahead at an incredibly fast pace. Competition is increasing in this age. It will not be possible to get by without educating women and making them self-reliant for the society of the 21st century which is not family-centric but centred around achievement. Attainments will supersede the importance of the family.

What is attainment? Let's suppose that you get married, you have a child, then your child has a child. You think that your family name is ensured, the son will bring glory to the father's name and your bloodline will flourish. I do not accept this way of thinking. Einstein discovered the famous formula of nuclear energy. Today his children are unknown but those scientists who carry on the work started by him are well-known to us. Nuclear energy and nuclear medicine came after Einstein. Will not all these things be considered to be Einstein's achievement and attainment?

The point I am making here is that the tradition of scientists, musicians, dancers or sannyasins is not the tradition of a dynasty but a tradition that is based on vidya, knowledge. The tradition of dynasties is hollow; it is only for one's personal gratification but the real tradition is that of vidya, a guru-tradition. There are guru-traditions in music, dance, astrology, mathematics, science, spirituality. Sannyasins, renunciates and Sikhs have a guru-tradition. Every vidya has a guru tradition. These are my thoughts about the 21st century. Now you have to think about the future for yourself. This is the call of the 21st century. Choose your own future!

Satsang 6

7 November 1997

Rural service

We have started educating the girls here, but so far these people are not even aware of what they will do with this education. The education being imparted is not going to be of any use to them because they are families of farmers and labourers. Having the basic foundations of literacy – reading, writing and arithmetic – this much is all right, I am in agreement with that. One should not be totally illiterate. But beyond this, you cannot teach them what they need because you yourself are ignorant about it. How to rear cattle, what is the right medicine, what are the vaccinations to be given, how will you recognize that the cow has come into heat, the illness of the cow, knowledge about milk, what feed is to be given at which time of the year, the different uses that you can make of cow dung, how to make gobar gas – the government does not give grants or money for this. What is the right crop for different seasons, how much fertilizer and water is needed, none of this is taught in schools.

Beyond basic literacy, the education imparted in schools is of no use in the rural areas. When was Aurangzeb born, what was the name of Jehangir's son, how many palaces did he build, who was the guru of Tansen, when did Rabindranath Tagore win the Nobel prize – none of this has any value or relevance for these people. The life in a village is limited to just surviving. They have no use for a telephone or a car. They are only concerned with how to build a house, how to rear a cow, how to grow vegetables, how to make pots, that's

all. This is the need of more than eighty percent of India's population, but this is not taught in India. Crores of rupees are spent by the Education Department in India for what is required at the most by twenty percent of the population, that's all. This twenty percent is a minority. The majority of the population is those eighty percent who live in villages, forests and mountains. How to extract oil from neem trees, how to make gum, resin, how to turn it into lac, how to sell it in the market for a good price, this practical education is what is needed in rural areas, not in cities. The Santhalis who live in the forests know more about all this than the officials and guards of the Forest department. The Santhali women here tie a particular creeper around their waist which has contraceptive properties.

Many wish to work in rural areas, but they do not have the qualities necessary to offer this service. During the freedom struggle there were many leaders in India who could make grand speeches, but why was it that only Gandhiji had such a great impact? Because Gandhiji knew how to use the spinning wheel. The village people know the spinning wheel because handloom weaving has been a very old rural craft. Gandhiji also inspired many villagers towards making gobar gas. Workers from the Khadi Gram Udyog would set up gobar gas plants in villages. Gandhiji gave people that education which was the need of more than eighty percent of the population. That is why Gandhiji's ideas were accepted by everyone.

Today the education being imparted in our country serves no purpose. BSc. and MSc. degree holders are surely being produced, but the number of the unemployed is also rising. Those people who work in banks make mistakes, even people working in the Municipal Corporation make errors. They can neither write English nor Hindi properly. The kind of people who are needed for rural service are those who understand the needs of the villagers. Ever since we have started keeping cows, we are trying to set up a gobar gas plant. We have the cow dung; we have full knowledge about it, but we are not able to find the right workers to build the gobar gas facility.

We might have to bring someone from Giridih. Some say to call a technician from Delhi. What kind of education system do we have that compels us to call a technician all the way from Delhi to set up a gobar gas plant?

Today the education in schools and colleges is just a form of vanity, only hollow arrogance. I also studied in a school and apart from the A-B-C-D and 1-2-3-4 that I learnt there, nothing else has been of any real use to me. Whatever came in handy to me has been what I learned during the twelve years I spent working in my guru's ashram. How to bring water when there is none to be found, how to construct a house, how to cook for 200 to 300 people, how to clean rice, how to differentiate between the rice grain and little stones, I learned all this. How to talk with people, how to interact with them and get them to work, I learned that too. How to live wisely, the ability to live well, this is the kind of education we need in rural areas.

When I was in Colombia, I stayed in a Catholic church. There was a wheel which had a small motor attached to it underneath. They used to collect china clay, make bowls and other pots, fire them in a furnace and then sell them in the market. That was how they used to run the church. I stayed there for a long time and learned all about this craft – how to mix the clay, what are the different ingredients that go into it, how long to fire the pots, what should be the temperature, which kind of wood is to be used. Some wood smokes a lot, there are no flames. Some wood creates more heat; other kinds produce less heat. Some wood retains heat for a long time, like bamboo. Other wood gets hot very fast but also cools equally fast. These were all the things that I learned. Then I went to Japan. In the village in which I stayed, the people mixed dyes into the clay and baked it in their yards. The blues and yellows that one sees in pottery, I learned how to do that as well. Now I cannot teach all that because I don't do that kind of work anymore.

I also know how and where to dig for water. In Munger, I had told them, "Dig here, you will find water." I do not search

for water in the traditional manner, I have another method. The kind of tree that grows, whether ants come out or not, is there a termite hill or not, these are the clues which can tell you a lot. I have had a well dug here too. The man who dug it said there is so much water here, you can irrigate the whole area. Irrigation meaning that a tubewell can be run for ten to twelve hours at a stretch. Teach villagers the art of looking for water so that they know where they can dig a well and where it is not a good idea to do so. Teach them to bore wells using bamboo. You don't need G.I., galvanised iron, pipes for boring wells. Cut the bamboo, splice it properly and tie it together carefully. But one needs someone who can teach all this. This is what is needed in villages.

India is in such a bad condition today because more than eighty percent of the people have no means, they are helpless. If they are alive today, it is not because of the government, administration or the army but only because of their own efforts. The reason why India is still alive today is because their survival instinct is extremely strong. If I throw four pieces of wood over the wall, in five minutes they will vanish. Leaves, bits of cloth, everything disappears. They know how to make good use of each and every scrap that they find.

The development of national strength

It is not sufficient that city folk like yourselves harbour aspirations to help villagers. You don't have the requisite knowledge for it. There are three necessities to serve in a village, to be born in a village, to live in a village and also to die in a village. India is in the villages and the villages are India. Delhi is not India, Delhi is a mixed culture. A little English, a little Hindi, little bit of Chinese, some Russian. There is no culture in big cities. For a tree to grow well, it needs strong roots, and in the same way for any country, society or person there also have to be three roots – character, conduct and thoughts. If the three are cut, it will remain stunted. You are all bonsai. Indian culture has become a bonsai; it is not growing.

Look at China. China has taken such a great leap forward that before his departure from America, when the Chinese Premier said that America has no right to interfere in China's internal matters, the American President was unable to reply to him. China openly said, 'Don't talk about Tiananmen Square', and in the same breath asked for access to modern nuclear technology. And America gave it. Can India ever speak like that? Only a nation that is powerful can make demands on another. A nation is not just a geographical entity, it is the name of a conglomeration of people. A nation is made by each and every person. Despite having all the power, America was compelled to share nuclear technology with China. Why? Because China has guts.

The father of the house tells the son to sit here and there he sits. It is then that people will go and speak with the father about doing this or that. The father has control over his son. As long as the father has no control over the son or the king has no control over his people, who is going to speak with that nation? It is absolutely essential that the king has control over the kingdom, the government has to have control over the people, whether it is democracy, socialism, dictatorship or any type of system. China has control, there is none here.

Anyway, we want hardworking and inspired people to come to the villages, buy some land, build a house, talk to the people there, understand their needs. What kind of clothes do they wear, what food do they eat, how do they live, they should get to know about all this. People send me handloom sarees; they do not know that village women do not wear handloom sarees, they like bright, shiny, synthetic sarees. Those sarees are very cheap and are long-lasting. When we give them beautiful handloom sarees, they don't wear them but put them aside to be worn only on special occasions.

What kind of shoes do villagers wear, what are the things they use, what don't they do, each and everything has to be found out. The culture of rural areas is a different culture. Their way of thinking is totally different. They are so clever that they know what is the *tithi*, the lunar date, today, whether

it is Ekadashi or Dwadashi, whether the tithi is shorter than or exceeds the date. They know all these things, there is no need to tell them. They observe all their rules, rites and rituals diligently. I told a girl to come to the ashram and learn English and she replied, "What am I to do after learning English? When I am married, all I will be doing is collecting cow dung." So I said, "Okay, don't learn English. Come and learn a little about working in a dispensary." How to tie a bandage, how to use a thermometer, how to clean a wound, learn to read X-rays, all this kind of thing. If a girl learns some reading and writing, a little pathology laboratory work, some first aid, give her a moped, she will go from village to village, work and earn a living.

Village folk need employment because agriculture is not sufficient to engage them profitably. In India agriculture is neither an industry nor is it *upaarjan*, a means of earning a living, it is simply a means of survival. They need to find some other work, apart from agriculture, to earn a livelihood. Once the Indian villager becomes self-reliant, our country will be in a better condition than Switzerland. This is the absolute truth. In order to make this a reality, there should be such people who leave everything behind, take sannyasa, live in villages and teach everyone. Marriage is not necessary and if you are married, bring your wife as well. Rishi Vasishtha, Vishwamitra and other sages like them were all married.

There should be incredible work in the villages. The government will not do this because they are not going to gain anything from it. Government only works where there is profit to be made. That is why people like you should come and work in the villages for about fifteen-twenty years, not more. The people here will start to understand things after some time, and there are great possibilities and prospects here, not in cities.

Rural education

In my opinion, the average labourer needs to be literate, he does not need the usual kind of education, but he must receive

vocational education. We have obtained good tools for the workers here. Not absolutely modern ones because those will not be of much use to them, but they have been given tools of good quality. They should only be taught what is necessary for them, and even the things they are given should be ones that they can use. The poetry taught to villagers should have a rural background. There is no point in teaching them about Raja Ram Mohan Roy; they should be taught about the area where they live. Rivers, streams, the local flora and fauna, that is what they should learn about, but there are hardly any poems about such subjects.

After we came to live here, there has been a lot of change and now there is a large attendance in the schools. In the villages here, *Ramacharitmanas* is very popular. Once we started it, it spread like wild fire. We distributed so many copies of the *Ramayana* that our store is empty. One day a girl came and I told her to learn some reading and writing. She asked me what would she do with all that. One day she saw a *Ramayana* which I had. I told her it was the *Ramayana* and she asked me to give her one as well. I told her to take it. When she had learned to read the *Ramayana*, I asked her, "So, have you learnt to read and write now?" she replied, "No, I don't know how to read and write, I only know to read the *Ramayana*!" Reading and being able to read the *Ramayana* are two different things for her, this is the unusual aspect that I discovered. Now everyone reads the *Ramayana* here. The point I am making is that through the *Ramayana*, we brought literacy to these people.

Prosperity versus struggle

I am a person who loves solitude. Today I am meeting all of you but after the marriage celebrations of Sita, my socializing will come to a complete halt. It has never been my inclination to meet people. I am inclined towards solitude. I like living in solitude, all by myself. Nowadays I don't even like to read books nor do I like to meet people, all I like to do is japa of the Lord's name. That is what gives me joy. When the mind

comes to a stop, on its own, not forcibly, it brings amazing joy to chant the Lord's name. The joy you experience when you are able to sleep after being totally tired out or the joy you feel on entering a cool room on a blistering hot day, it is that kind of joy I am talking about. I do not wish to be away from that joy now. I will depart taking that joy with me and will return with the same joy.

I do not believe in moksha. I will return and when I do, I will not be born in a wealthy home, but I will be reborn in a poor family. Due to my karmas, I was born in an affluent family and grew up amidst plenty and prosperity. I have only seen glory and plenty since my childhood. But I do not like it. Despite having so much if I did not indulge in it, what is the use of having this prosperity and wealth? I have seen plenty of wealth in my life but have never been able to derive pleasure from it. I did not want to have it, there was no desire to enjoy it. Now I think it would have been better to have been born without it. I should be born in a poor home, belonging to a low caste. It would be best if I was born to a prostitute or an unwed mother. I do not believe it is beneficial to be born in a well-known family. What is fame and what is affluence? This is all just hollow vanity in the minds of people. One should be born into an ordinary family, the home of a thief or a sinner. If a sadhu is born in a good home, what is the good of that? After all, a sadhu does not even use soap! A sadhu should be born in a house where there is dirt. That is what I have thought of, then it is up to the will of God where He sends me. If I am given a choice, I would like a home where there is constant poverty.

Someone who has never seen poverty cannot know life at all. Life has no juice without struggle. I always tell people that Sweden is the most advanced country in the world. There is no need to worry about jobs, marriage, children, housing, health care. Everything is taken care of. But it has the highest suicide rate. Why? Because they have no struggle or strife in their lives. You get a job without making any effort, you get medical care easily, you get everything and there is no need

to strain or struggle for anything. When there is no need to struggle, there is a lot of crime and suicide. Struggles pave the way for a man to move ahead in life. As long as the people in Europe and America struggled and worked hard, they advanced a lot. Now there is no more struggle in their lives and the time of their downfall has come.

No civilization can progress without struggling. When the struggles cease, the civilization dies. I would tell them quite openly in Europe, your days are numbered, and they accept this to some extent as well. Psychologists, social thinkers, historians – they all say this. In the civilization where there is no need to struggle anymore, where even the electricity is free, fertilizer and seed is available at a low cost, railway tickets are cheap, why on earth would you work hard in such a place? This is the mark of a handicapped society. The reason why villagers in India are alive today is because they have to struggle at every step, every moment. People from here go to seek a daily wage job in Deoghar. Some days they stand around but don't get a single job and return home empty-handed. There is no food in the house, the wife is sick, whom can they turn to? They take a loan, go to the doctor, he sends them from pillar to post for this check-up and that test and takes two hundred rupees from them. This is the kind of struggle they live all their lives.

You say that humanity progresses through struggle. India has always struggled, yet despite that has India not advanced?

There have been some mistakes made over the last few thousand years which have handicapped the thought process and stymied the power of thinking. Many different religions, faiths and rulers came and thanks to them, the way of thinking and the Indian mentality were steadily weakened. The people here were told time and time again that this is incorrect, that is wrong. The Buddhist faith said, 'You must stop all these sacrifices, it is wrong.' The practice of offering may well be wrong but it still continues as before. The only difference is that earlier it

was a communal activity, now it is a personal, individual act. It could not be stopped. What happened as a result of this is that people began to feel inferior and incomplete.

People say that there is too much of caste difference here, too much untouchability. Yes, of course discrimination is bad, but it exists everywhere. Ask me about it, I have travelled the world and stayed in many countries. The extent of racism and prejudice that exists in Europe is much more than what you see in India. The gypsies or the Romany people have lived there for a thousand years but they still do not have any proper place to call their own because they belong to a different race. They have not been able to settle down in Russia, Romania, France or Spain. They are simply not accepted anywhere. They stay somewhere for about four years and then they have to move on, they are thrown out. Their children do not get admission into schools, they can't avail of education because they belong to another race.

There is discrimination in India as well but the condition here is not as bad as it is there. The barber has to be invited for a wedding, you cannot dispense with him. If an animal in the house dies, you have to call the *chamar*, the man who works with leather, or a cobbler, there is no other option. Things must change, I accept, but we are not so bad. There people of one race cannot look someone from another race in the eye. During the time of the USSR, there was a country called Yugoslavia which was broken up into many different parts. One part was called Serbia, another became Macedonia, the third one was Bosnia, the fourth was Croatia, Slovenia was the fifth one. These tiny countries were created. I am not talking of ancient history, it happened during the last ten to fifteen years of the 20th century.

'You people follow the practice of the caste system' – this was what we were told repeatedly and made to feel inferior, whereas racism and discrimination exists in the whole world. You can see it in America too. The native people of that land are called Red Indians. They are forced to live on reservations and live in very deprived and backward conditions. The

natives of Australia are called Aboriginals and they also live on segregated land. Their lands were forcibly taken away and now they live in other places. This is their condition. When a French girl had a relationship with a German boy, she was caught by her own family and her head used to be shaved. This is how much they hate each other. I have a student in France; she says that English is the language of stupid people. You are my guru and you speak English which is why I agree to speak it, otherwise to hell with it. This is the kind of mentality those people have.

We have been taught to feel inferior and that is the reason we are not able to progress. The other important fact is that whichever race has ruled over India, the rulers have all been only involved in indulging themselves. They had no idea of reality. No, a king has to live with the people, he has to understand their needs.

What kind of difficulties do Indians and foreigners encounter when they take sannyasa? After all, they come from very different backgrounds.

See, first there is something called the sannyasa ashrama. You have experienced *grihastha ashrama* or householder life, you have experienced the vanaprastha ashram, you have seen poverty and wealth, had children and family life, then you take sannyasa and go to live in an ashram where you live for the last few years and then you die. That is called sannyasa ashrama. There is no problem there, whether you are European or Indian, Hindu or Muslim. There is no problem about marriage, not this problem or that problem. But one does not take sannyasa only after one has crossed 50 or 60 years of age. Sannyasa also refers to an expression and a particular feeling.

Another is the sannyasa community, like the Christian community, Shaiva community or Vaishnava community. There is initiation, there are rules and regulations, there is a prescribed behaviour to be followed. There are duties and rituals which are called codes of conduct. Among those

who enter the sannyasa community, some come only for the convenience of it. You are given food and life is easy. But those do not number many. If someone takes sannyasa for this reason, after sometime there is a change also. They end up staying in the company of others, isn't it?

Then there are others, especially those who are eighteen or nineteen years old, who experience a kind of change in their minds. At that time, the idea of solitude enters their head and they feel drawn to sannyasa. In the majority of people, one sees that the idea of sannyasa comes between the ages of eighteen and fifty, out of such people some end up taking sannyasa. Some tell their families and come, some even run away from home. Most of them stay on, about fifty percent return, this is my estimate.

Now out of these, the ones who stay on, at different times, face different problems. The biggest problem is *kama*, desire. *Krodha* or anger, *lobha* or greed, *mamata* or possessiveness, and *moha* or infatuation are not such big obstacles. Those who have *mamata* and *moha* in them, they number about twenty-five and return home fairly soon. They miss their mothers or their brothers. People affected by *moha-mamata* are the first ones to leave. The biggest problem the others face is desire. Among these, there are some who can handle it. When the clouds cover the sky in the winter, after some time they go away and the sun shines. Not a big problem, remove your sweater and sit in the sun. When the clouds linger for days on end like during the monsoon season and the thoughts of desire are always in your head, morning to night, then it becomes a real problem. At that time, two situations can develop – either the person becomes distorted or he enters into a relationship, he meets someone or other. Then there are only two options – either you lead a solitary life or you return home and get married. This is something that everyone faces, Indians and foreigners. The only difference is that Indian society will not accept it whereas the western society will accept it.

I have a foreign sannyasi disciple who lived with me for twelve years. Then he returned to his country and got

married. Even today, the people there refer to him as a sannyasi. No one says that now he has become a grihastha, a householder. He uses his sannyasa name on his passport, his driving license and other documents. Problems are faced by all people, whether they are Indians or foreigners, but the westerners are more practical and realistic. Now after staying in the ashram for twelve years, this sannyasin felt that he should get married. So he left and got married, what's wrong with that? Should sannyasins accept this or not? We say that sannyasa is a *sampradaya*, a community, but they look upon sannyasa as a way of living, an *ashrama*, a stage of life. That is why there is not that much difficulty in the West, the problems are faced here.

They also have one less problem. In their society, boys and girls mix freely together from childhood, they are used to dealing with each other from very early days. It is very normal and ordinary for them to talk to each other, fight, form friendships, they move around freely together. That is why being in each other's company is not such a big deal for them. Some of them might even live together for ten years or so, but that's all, then it is – you go your way and I go mine'.

This is not something that can happen with Indians. Boys have not been familiar with girls from childhood, suddenly when they encounter one, their mind goes off track. Am I saying anything wrong? Doesn't it happen? We do not have this ability to adapt to their company because we are not used to spending time with them in childhood. We do not have the practice of girls and boys mixing freely with each other. That is why the least proximity ends in a relationship. Then what is the solution after that? Marriage and after getting married they are not able to see themselves as sannyasins. Earlier if this one was called Pavitrananda and that one was called Atmanubhavananda, now that is all finished. They say that we are not sannyasins anymore, we have become householders. This is the difference between India and Europe.

There is only one solution to this problem – under no circumstances, do not leave the guru's ashram for twelve years,

stay there and do karma yoga. Physical activity offers a way to channelize one's emotions. I am speaking from experience. I was a very hot-headed person. For the caste into which I was born, the kshatriya caste, any girl is yours for the taking. This is not the practice among Brahmins and Vaishyas. We are people who fight in battles. Your wife does not accompany you to war. We are taught not to think along those lines. Hard physical labour is done in the guru's ashram like ploughing fields, cleaning, cooking, lifting heavy loads, the body gets tired, you feel very hungry, your digestive system stays healthy and you sleep well – falling asleep quickly, no dreams. Under such circumstances, even if desires rear their head, they have to go away because there is the ground to be tilled, you have to climb the trees and pluck fruit, sweep the ashram.

A sannyasi who is fully occupied with work all day long, when is he going to have the time or inclination to think about a wife? Even if the thought enters your head, it will drift away like a summer cloud. But if you sit in your room and read *Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagwat*, you will definitely fall into the trap. And if you do not, then consider it as the grace of god!

That is why I tell my sannyasins, not swadhaya, not dhyana, not asana and pranayama but just hard work. I have never practised asana and pranayama in my life; yes, I have taught it for sure. I was never interested in asana and pranayama. I did not know anything about it either. I had never read any books about it. Yes, I have written books and of such authority that no one can challenge them, but I have never practised asana, pranayama, neti, dhauti, basti etc. I have only done one thing – hard work. When did I stop that? In 1983. That was when I stopped doing hard work because I am free from the danger zone!

That is the reason why karma yoga is very important. It can liberate you from dangers. There might be the occasional slip-up, but it does not tie you down. Even if a sannyasin makes a mistake or two but stays a sannyasi and dies as a sannyasi, that will be considered an achievement.

The other requirement is not to want good food and wear nice clothes. Eat ordinary food, wear ordinary clothes. There is a difference in good food and ordinary food. People say that milk is essential for a sadhu. Why is that so? Milk is full of protein and that is the cause of all the trouble. After all, you have been born from protein. An important component of semen is protein. In the same way, the body does not need fragrant, sweet-smelling things. Yes, the body needs oil. You know what I used to do? I used to ask for neem oil. Neem oil keeps mosquitoes away and keeps the body healthy as well. Then why do you need camphor oil or coconut oil?

Good food and good clothes are not appropriate for an aspirant. Nature has endowed the body with so much that you can get along for life on them. Take the example of the thyroid gland. After the age of fourteen or fifteen, it begins to secrete a hormone and stays active until the age of almost eighty. Gorakhnath and other adepts kept it active for much longer, that is another matter. If you dip the tip of a needle in water and when you remove it, the amount of water that is holds is the quantity of hormone that is secreted by this gland in twenty-four hours. On the strength of that hormone, you don't even feel cold in the winter. The thyroid performs the function of regulating the temperature in the body. This is a gift of nature. After the age of eighty when the thyroid gland gets weak you need a sweater, you need heaters and a fire to keep warm, hot tea or coffee is required. This temperature control function is not working properly in any of you, but mine is fine!

I am not saying that you should not eat. Of course you must eat – grains, vegetables, dal, fruit but you don't need things like eggs, milk, ghee, fish, soya beans. We are talking in relation to those people who wish to take sannyasa at a young age and wish to maintain that commitment for life, they do not wish to be caught in any snare of nature. Desire is so basic and natural that even God is not free from it. After all, wasn't there union between Purusha and Prakriti? The two of them came together and all of creation manifested after that. In

Sanskrit, this is called *mithuna*. When two opposite qualities, two opposing poles unite, that is called *mithuna*. In scientific terms, it is called fusion. This is a very important activity of Nature. Why should one gain victory over this? Because it makes the mind very unsteady, it creates huge upheavals in the mind. White begins to look black and black seems white. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna says (2:62–63):

*Sangaat samjaayate kaamaha kaamaatkrodhoabhijayate
Krodhaat bhavati sammohaha sammohaat smrutivibhramaha
Smrutibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat prannashyati*

Where does desire spring from? From association. Association means attachment, getting stuck to something. It starts there and ends up destroying your intelligence.

Taking *sannyasa* is very good, especially in the present times. It is also necessary for the nation. We are eighty lakh *sannyasins* in India. If all of us also get married, the population will jump to a billion, and if another eighty lakh take *sannyasa*, then instead of ninety it will stay at eighty crores. From that perspective also, it is very good.

Another point - how much joy and how much sorrow is there in married life? It is not that it is a bed of roses or something like ‘Damned if you do and damned if you don’t’. Take a look at your parents, your aunts and uncles, your neighbours. That will tell you what the real situation is. If you think that householder life is a complete and fulfilling experience or you feel it is something that you need, by all means do so, there is nothing wrong in it. After all, dealing with sorrow is also great training. But if you feel that no, I will live alone, I will manage my life then *sannyasa* is the right path for you.

A *sannyasin* must not be without direction or without a goal. Never mind that a *sannyasin* wields a plough but the goal must be spirituality. The purpose of *sannyasa* is not *seva*, it is spirituality. Gaining knowledge about the spirit should

be the goal of a sannyasin which is almost impossible in householder life. If not impossible, it is certainly extremely difficult. The senses which are beyond the body, the mind which is beyond the senses, the spirit which is beyond the mind and the eternal, divine Spirit which is beyond the spirit, the knowledge of that is the goal of a sannyasin. We have been told this over centuries by our rishis and munis. Apart from this, sannyasa has no other purpose. Apart from that, whatever else you do is to attain perfection in sannyasa. If you are going to Bombay from here, in order to get there you first have to go to Calcutta, you will need to sleep on the way, have some tea and snacks, talk to people. In the same way, keeping the goal of sannyasa in mind, you can do many things.

Swamiji, you said that self-realization is not impossible for householders to achieve but that it is definitely difficult. Why is that so?

That is because the householder has to follow social norms. There are social pressures to live a certain way, wear a certain type of clothing, think in a particular manner, do that, don't do that. They are slaves of social dictates. In ancient times, grihastha ashrama or householder life was also considered to be an important limb in the attainment of the highest goal, but today the goal has become limited to only seeking mundane achievements and mere indulgence.

Sannyasa ashrama is not as difficult as people think it to be. Especially for girls and women, it is not difficult at all. Leaving the home is natural for them. The only difficult thing is that they should be able to do sadhana in the right manner. The first element in sadhana is karma yoga. Karma yoga is the first topic that Sri Krishna speaks on in the *Gita*. Raja yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga came later. Karma yoga is the basic foundation and Swami Sivananda also used to say, seva first. The importance of guru seva and ashram life is not only talked about by us, it is also mentioned in the scriptures several times. What is the meaning of guru seva? After all, how

much are you going to wash my loin cloth, there is only one! Guru seva is working for the ashram or completing whatever task is entrusted to you by the guru. If the guru says, go into the village there, make a hut for yourself and teach people how to plough the fields, do just that.

There is a lot of energy during the time of youth. That energy must find the right direction and that direction is karma yoga. Apart from the mantra my guru gave me, I did not do any other sadhana. My guru said to me, "Do not do any sadhana now. Your train has not yet arrived, spend time on the platform for now." I said, "Okay, so how long should I wait?" He replied, "Forty to fifty years." Just because you have come to the station three hours early is no reason that the train will arrive early for you. You have to spend the time, whether you munch on peanuts, sit in the waiting room, read the newspaper or stand around on the platform and talk to people. I passed the time. One must prepare oneself and make oneself eligible to undertake the higher sadhanas.

I had no idea about sannyasa. I led a life of comfort and luxury. I did not even have any idea about the fact that it is not good to eat meat or drink alcohol. No one told me that. I found out about this only after I came to my guru's ashram. I did not think about sannyasa at all. I had read about the fact that one can have spiritual experiences. Then I encountered a yogini and she helped me to have experiences and that changed my mind totally. All my plans went for a toss. Earlier, I had wanted to earn a lot of money and live in comfort. When I left my home, it was not to take sannyasa but to search for a guru. I did not have any inkling about sannyasa. Yes, many saints and sannyasins used to visit my home like Anandamayi Ma and Swami Nityananda, but I did not pay them much heed. When the yogini helped me to have a glimpse of different spiritual experiences, she also told me that if I wanted to consolidate these experiences and give them a more permanent place in my life I should search for a guru. That was when I set off to look for a guru, but even at that time I had not accepted the idea of sannyasa. Sannyasa

was never something that entered my head, not even after I left my home.

What I mean to say is that if one is destined to be a sannyasi, that is exactly what he will become. Becoming emotionally attached to someone, pondering over past memories, all that has never ever been part of my nature. If someone dies, that is it, they are gone. Sannyasa is a very good thing and people should think about it, but if someone wishes to take sannyasa, there should be no ambivalence in their minds. Like if one wants to commit suicide, one does not think about whether one should do it or not. In the same way, you cannot be in two minds about whether to take sannyasa or not. Once someone said to me, "I feel like dying." And I said, "Okay, so then go and die!" He said, "If you say so." I replied to him, "Look here, someone who asks about it never commits suicide." In the same way, anyone who asks about taking sannyasa never takes it. Sannyasa is a one-way street. There should be a strong internal resolve. If you have a strong idea, a strong decision, only then take sannyasa.



Satsang 7

10 November 1997



Today in villages, to a large extent, girls are not yet interested in education. They are not aware that with education their future will attain security. This idea is stuck in their heads that a woman finds maximum security in married life. There is a little change in regard to this in cities nowadays. Girls are realizing that they can also find security in education and employment. If a girl has an idea about becoming self-reliant, a lot can be achieved because girls can score very good marks in examinations. Girls get very good results in the exams conducted in cities.

This idea has been stuck in the minds of girls that their only future lies in marriage and this is something that we have

put into their heads. Married life is one aspect of life that everyone should have, but saying that married life is the only future for a girl is not the whole truth, it is a half-truth. If girls do not understand this, as they grow older they will not be able to avail of any opportunities. Nowadays girls have many facilities, there are many opportunities in the work place. As time goes on, these will not be available and they will have to fight and confront men.

That is why it is the duty of the parents to inculcate the attitudes of positivity and interest in education. Our scriptures lay great emphasis on this but we have forgotten that in our vedic culture, which you call Hindu religion, the choice of a marriage partner is left to the girl, not to her parents. Our dharma shastras say that a girl has the right to choose her own bridegroom. This is the meaning of *swayamvar*, making one's own choice. This was a regular practice in olden days, you must have read stories about it. There were different ways in which swayamvars used to be conducted. In some places, the grooms had to participate in an archery contest where the eye of a fish had to be pierced with an arrow; in other places they had to lift and string a bow. The point I am making here is that despite the fact that marriage is an important foundation of society, it is an essential activity, but it is still not the only option for a girl's future. In the coming times, marriage is not going to be the only future available to a girl.

Every religion, every society and each person must develop the habit of being open to criticism. Kabir says, *Nindak neeyari raakhiye* – 'One must appreciate one's critics'. After all, who has seen one's true face in this world? If it has been seen, it is only through another person or a mirror. Saints and seers say that as a man cannot see his own face, in the same way, a man is not able to see his own nature either. You may have some information about your thoughts but you do not know about your mind. Nobody knows. Even psychologists say exactly this. A man may well be able to see some of his thoughts, but the mind is another matter altogether, it is something that no one can see.

Swamiji, I have a problem. I go to satsangs, I come here, but I don't go to temples. I am allergic to the pandits and priests there. When people demand money in temples, I am not inclined to give them anything. I had gone to Amarkantak, even there I did not feel like giving any money in the temples, but I felt like serving the pilgrims who had come there. I am not able to understand this problem.

Each person has his or her own ideas and beliefs. Many people don't have any problem in taking prasad and offering money in temples; many others will prefer not to give the money there but distribute it among the poor people sitting outside the temples. These are one's individual choices and ideas. If everyone thought just like you or if everyone had the same ideas that I have, then society will not work. I might feel like building a temple but you will say, "What is the point of making temples, build a hospital or an orphanage instead?" You are right, but if everyone builds only orphanages, where will the sick people go? If everyone gives generous donations only to build hospitals, where will the orphaned children go? Society needs the temples, hospitals, orphanages, and dharmashalas are also required, and along with all these, society also needs hotels.

Our vedic dharma is also connected with economics. Without economics, there can be no dharma, no moksha nor any society. Without money, how will society function? You buy fifty-one litres of milk to perform abhishek, some people are given the opportunity to sell the milk and make six or seven hundred rupees. Those people need to earn a living as much as we need to offer pooja to God. If we are not able to make it possible for someone to earn money when we offer pooja to God, that pooja is useless. Several hundreds and thousands of people make a living because people visit temples in India. Incense is sold, bananas are bought, garlands, leaf bowls, vermilion powder, sweets – all this is sold. Artha, kama, dharma, moksha – these are the four purusharthas prescribed in our dharma. In the way you combine salt, turmeric, cumin and water when you cook a vegetable dish, these four are also related to each other.

Society does not need only temples. A temple is just one place in society. Many people leave money in their will for building water tanks and other communal facilities. Some leave it to dharmashalas, many leave endowments to hospitals. Some make contributions to a trust so that deserving students can benefit from it. So you have one way of thinking, somebody has other ideas, everyone has different ideas.

Everyone is born with their own ideas. When the temple at Yamunotri was destroyed in the 1988 flood disaster, someone donated crores of rupees to rebuild it, and hundreds of masons found employment. After all, when we visit temples, we don't go there merely as tourists. We go to seek refuge in the divine, we go to God with the hope of fulfilling a wish, we go to offer something to God.

When one goes with a feeling of surrender yet one has to deal with unpleasant conditions and behaviour, then one does not feel like going into the temple.

Well, one has one's own perspective. If you have any control over it, perhaps you would like to perform the pooja free of any cost and even come away with some prasada. But I say, 'No, we are not giving anything to God.' We are giving something in the name of offering to God, but we are actually giving it to the people. If an old priest earns fifty rupees, his children's school fees can be paid. If the flower seller makes fifty or one hundred rupees, her children will be looked after. God does not need the bananas, nor does he need the flowers or the Ganga water because, after all, he is the one who gives us everything. The sun and moon are his eyes; they are his lamps. When he has such great lamps, you wave small lights in front of him, what a strange idea that is!

When we go to a temple, we surrender our emotions there. We surrender our miserliness, our meanness. What is man's greatest weakness? Grabbing and clutching at things is what man does; he does not know how to give anything. He only excretes and urinates. All the other creatures in the world, all the animals and birds, they give generously and freely

of everything. The cow gives milk, the hen gives eggs, but man only grabs and snatches for himself. This is his greatest weakness.

All creatures of the world live for others but only man lives for selfish ends. Even after death, he is of no use. Family members are in a hurry to finish the last rites for they don't want the person to become a ghost and haunt the home. Now, in order to turn this selfish man's inclination towards doing good for others, the scriptures have prescribed a path to perform acts of charity and giving. Give to temples, give to the blind, donate to the poor and lepers. To give to others, this should be the dharma of man.

Those who go to temples, they are all sick. A sick person goes to the hospital, and in the same manner, someone who has a mind which is afflicted goes to temples. What is the sickness of the mind? Anxiety, sorrow, fear – now these are just three that I am mentioning here, but the mind has a plethora of ailments which are called *manas rog*, mental sickness, in the *Ramacharitmanas*. Where will a creature afflicted by so many ailments seek refuge? Will he go to a doctor or go to Baidyanath, Badrinath or Kedarnath? The cure for mental sickness can be found only in the vision, worship and surrender to God.

Then the question arises that the temple which you visit has some funds, some administration, some facilities, there are doors and windows, electricity. Who will look after all that? Who will run the homes of the people who do this work? That is why it is said in our traditions to offer something at the temple. Everyone will benefit. The doorkeeper will earn five hundred rupees a month. The priests who are well-versed in the scriptures will earn about ten to fifteen thousand rupees a month. This system was created by the rishis and munis, otherwise God does not need anything. God does not want anything other than surrender, love and devotion from you.

Money is required to maintain temples and where will that come from? You and I will give, isn't it? You pay a subscription for your newspapers, you pay membership fees to your club,

but do you pay your temple dues? No. Yes, I am willing to accept that sometimes rituals and ceremonies in temples are improperly conducted. The priests don't chant the mantras correctly, they are not well-behaved, they have developed bad habits, the temple is not kept clean. I accept all these shortcomings, but that does not mean that temples are not needed. If we go to God and just offer our obeisance and leave, the priests will die of hunger.

Many people find peace and solace when they visit temples. They introspect, some negative habits fall away, but some people do not need this, they don't go there. They prefer to journey to the wide open spaces, enjoy the clean fresh air of green forests and high mountains. Now, for such people, there must be something in society. There are people who have many different needs and therefore different facilities and places will serve these needs. Only having temples will not suffice. A lot of people are looking for quiet, peaceful places. Manali is surrounded by high mountains on all four sides, there is not much habitation there, the river flows in the valley below. Go and spend fifteen to twenty days there with your family. Do this, go here, go there, spend a few thousand rupees. If money is not spent, the economy will be crippled.

After all, what is the secret of economics? Ensure that people spend money. Prosperity does not only imply income but that money has to be spent as well. This is economics. If you buy a shawl from someone or go to a hotel, then someone will earn an income. If you buy a saree, then someone will make a sale too and the next day the same man will buy a saree for his wife. The secret of prosperity is spending money and not keeping it in the bank. It is a waste to store it in the bank for your children. Remember this always. The secret of prosperity is not hoarding money but spending it. When gold, silver, pearls and diamonds are stuffed into safe deposit lockers, it means that the economy is crippled.

Unless a man spends money, he will not have any idea about his income either. There are ten kilos of gold in the house, money is lying in the bank, three or four flats are

given on rent – in such circumstances, a man does not have to face any hardships. The race which does not deal with hardships and struggles is never able to progress. Only a man who struggles succeeds and prospers. This is very important for a person's material, emotional and spiritual growth; it is essential in order to find happiness. I will give you an example to illustrate what I am saying. On a hot summer's day, you walk in the sun for three miles and someone offers you a drink of cold water, you really appreciate that; but if you are sitting comfortably in an air-conditioned room and someone calls you for a drink of cold water, you will say that you don't want it right now. Water is enjoyed when one is thirsty. You can really savour coolness only when you are feeling very hot.

Whether the struggle is faced in business or in your job, whether it is a political struggle or faced in family life, a man who does not want to struggle finds that all doors are closed to him. What happened to races which stopped struggling? The Greek civilization died, Rome was finished, Egyptian civilization died out too. India has also died. At one time, the Indian civilization was of a very high standard, people from all over the world used to throng here. It was known as the 'Golden Bird'. But it died out. Why did that happen? There was no more struggle. There is an abundance of water here, it has six seasons. The people here do not have to struggle. Once they harvest their crops, the farmers can sit relaxed for the rest of the year. They earn four to five hundred rupees a month and are content with that, it is enough to get by for the month. In Europe, it snows for six months in the year. Vegetables are grown in greenhouses. They have to wear warm woollen clothes for twenty-four hours. Every room has to have a heater. They can't use kerosene stoves. This is what they have to face, and they struggle with all this.

It is also said that instead of struggling, one must be content.

I will explain the meaning of contentment later, first you must understand what struggle means. Struggle implies ceaseless strife. The situation is going in one direction and

you are forging ahead in the opposite direction, this is called struggle. Transforming difficult situations into those that are conducive to your need – that is called struggling. As far as contentment and indulgence go, all races who have preached indulgence and indolence are reduced to poverty today. They are not only poor; they are backward as well. Not just backward but crippled. This is their condition. The 20th century is drawing to a close and the 21st century is beginning, but here more than 70% of the population does not even have proper toilets. Are they content? No, they are forced to stay in these circumstances and so they do. They get up at four o'clock in the morning and head to the jungle to relieve themselves; they have to do it, there is no other choice. This is not contentment.

I am content. Why? Because I do not have any wants or wishes. One who does not wish for anything is the one who is content. Living with wishes and suppressing them is not contentment, it is repression. You look at your neighbour's television set, his new motorcycle, the jewellery his wife wears, his house and you experience a wish for all those things in your heart, don't you? You talk about it with your wife and children. Where is contentment? This is all fake, it is hypocrisy.

It is said that contentment brings mental peace.

One has to try and feel that kind of contentment. In other words, that kind of contentment is really forcing oneself to come to a compromise between one's aspirations and the reality of a situation. For instance, if you ask someone for something and they refuse, then you are forced to come to terms with it, isn't it? This kind of contentment is suppressing one's wishes, nothing else. As long as your mind has wishes, hopes and desires, you never really find anything called contentment. Contentment is a natural spontaneous state of being which arises when desires end. No, desires do not really end but they transform into something else. The desires one entertained for one's own self-oriented

satisfaction and fulfilment: 'This is my car', 'These are my possessions and wealth', this is mine, that is mine. When one feels that way about others, when one starts thinking about the welfare of others, then true contentment comes, not until then. I am saying all this based on my own personal experience.

Wishes are a defining trait of human beings. Someone who has no wishes and desires is mad, stupid. Having wishes is a particular characteristic, it is the identity of human beings. What does it mean to have wishes? The idea of attaining something, the wish to eat something, the desire to visit some place, the inclination to fall in love with someone, the wish to meet someone, a wish to read a particular book, to go to a temple, to set off on a pilgrimage, to go and see the sights in England – these are called wishes and desires. She has a really nice saree; I would also like to have a similar one – this is called a wish. Aspirations, hopes, longings, desires are different names for wishes. There is a word in Hindi, 'mahatvaakaanksha'. I want to become a municipal legislator, I want to become the chancellor of a university, I want my picture to be published in newspapers, I would like the book that I write to become a bestseller – this is mahatvaakaanksha. *Mahatva* means important and *akanksha* means what one hopes for, in other words, it refers to one's most important and longed-for hopes.

Wishes are the dreams of a human being's life and they should not end. So do not talk of contentment. Anyone who speaks about contentment is indulging in just political hype. It is very good if there is contentment but what is this contentment? Suppressing the desires of your mind and coming to a compromise is not contentment. Contentment means feeling that whatever you have is sufficient for you. Everything else is for others. What does a mother do? She feeds the children, she serves the meals to her husband and her in-laws and she eats whatever is left. Does that trouble her? Does she suffer from it? No. That is true contentment.

Our elders have experienced contentment, but today we have desires. How should we come to terms with that?

That will not happen because of the generation gap. In earlier times, when an elder said something to the younger ones, they quietly agreed and accepted it, but that is not the case with the present generation. The people of today believe that they are the creators of their own future and they are right. Everyone must remember this fact. No one is the means to fulfil another person's wishes, no one is anyone else's support. Neither the husband, nor the wife, not the father or the son, not the guru or the disciple.

Everyone has their own individual destiny. Now when I have my own destiny, my father has no right to interfere in my destiny. I accept that you are my father. I became your son because of a biological accident. Did you make a special plan to ensure that I was born? Please don't take offence, but did any father make any special plans to have that son? Did you follow Brahmacharya with a true heart? Or worship gods and goddesses? Practise special codes of conduct to make sure that you could have a son like Rama, Hanuman, Buddha or Mahavir? No, you were born out of an act of desire. We were all born like that. We are the animal creations of our mothers and fathers. In the way that dogs, cats, elephants, horses, goats and moths are born, we are born in the same way. Now what can you expect from such offspring? What can you expect from such parents?

But the mother also participates in this activity, doesn't she?

The mother has a predominant role. The father's role is minimal. The mother is responsible for the life of a child because it is born out of her body, stays with her, drinks her milk. It is her voice that he hears first, her company is the first that is experienced by a child, it is her touch that is the first touch. A child belongs to the mother, not to the father. Legally it might belong to the father, but from a scientific perspective, the child belongs to the mother.

How did Jijabai give birth to Shivaji? Before she had conceived, she used to ride horses and climb hills and mountains. She created *samskaras*, patterns of behaviour, within herself. Prahlad's mother prepared herself before she conceived him. In order to hold Bhagvan Buddha in her womb, his mother, Ma Mahamaya, prepared herself. In order to prepare for Luv and Kush, Sita had to live in Valmiki's ashram. These are preparations. A mother is responsible for that. Even psychology says that until the age of seven, whatever a child learns is from the mother: *Maataapraathamoguruh* – 'Mother is the first guru or teacher'. The mother is the first protector, the first guide. Then worldly education begins after the age of seven which is marked by the thread ceremony, being sent to the gurukul and other practices.

Today if our children are wayward, it is because of the mother for she herself is rudderless and ignorant. The one who should be your first teacher is incapable, she does not have the necessary qualities. She does not know what psychology is or the way to inculcate good habits and behaviour in her child. What are the situations that children will have to confront in the coming century? Both the parents will have to go out to work, then what will they do with the child? Will they leave the child alone at home? They will have to leave the child in the care of the babysitter. There is a new culture in Europe where girls from good homes do the work of caring for children, this is now going to be the case here in India too.

In the same way, the question of their marriage will also arise. 'Do not think about getting married before you have started earning an income' should be your advice to them: 'We are not going to arrange for your wedding, that is for sure. And as far as this house goes, land and estate, we are going to prepare a will and leave all this to a trust. We wish to make an orphanage and have told the executor of our will that after our death, everything should go to that organization and not to you, remember that. So don't depend upon us. You should get married, of course, but we say that until the time that you can stand on your own two feet, afford insurance for yourself

and your wife, get a house on rent, do not get married. Because marriage is like bringing a white elephant into the house.'

I am not saying anything wrong. This madness about marriage has to be stopped. Otherwise, the moment a girl is born you start thinking about her marriage. This ailment of marriage which our society suffers from, is not in keeping with the changing times of today. I agree one hundred percent that marriage is a necessity in life. I am not saying that society must manage without this institution but without the marriage-fever which afflicts us all now; marriage has become our psychological sickness. Parents turn grey worrying about it, people die of heart attacks. Doesn't it happen?

As the child approaches fourteen years of age, give a notice to the child a year before that – 'Look here, son, you are going to become a man soon. From next year, you have to start making the effort to become independent. Go out in the morning, sell newspapers, we can give you this much advice.' The son might say, 'Oh my god! My father owns a petrol pump and I have to go out and sell newspapers?' But this is the right thing for him.

This is one way that I have just told you about. Another one is, 'Son, you do not need to worry about anything. The whole shop is yours. After all, there is no one else, you are my only heir.' This is a very dangerous thing. You are hell-bent on ruining your child's life because of your attachment and your ignorance. This is not compatible with the new age that we are living in now. The world is changing very fast, especially India. India is rushing headlong towards western culture. Western music has come in, gadgets and conveniences, even western style of food has come. Your cooking is more western nowadays. If all these western elements have come in, why not also adopt the western way of making your children independent and capable of becoming self-reliant?

Why are western children so strong? They do not inherit anything from their parents. There people make their will before they die and they do not leave everything to their children. Due to that, the children do not depend upon the

parents. Children who stay forever under the shelter of their parents never become anything in life. Your days have gone, but make the coming generations strong and tough. Make them capable of handling difficulties and strife, help them to become independent and self-reliant. Along with that, you have to bring in one hundred percent education for girls. Girls have to be endowed with the best qualities. If the mothers-to-be are accomplished, the future of the children they will bear will be bright. It is absolutely essential for a mother to be capable from every perspective. The country cannot be uplifted by the government. The government is an institution which has its own limitations.

The time when you all were growing up, the country was socialist. The government ran shops, made roads, provided electricity, made toilets, cleaned the toilets, cleaned the roads. The government used to do everything. But I am not willing to accept this. I say that the only job the government has is to give guidance. They should only say that this is how things should be. The government should not interfere in our personal, social and religious life. Each person should run their own shop. We should run our own banks and not depend upon the government. This is the age of prosperity, not of equality and socialism. Equality and socialism was one phase, one condition in politics. Those socialist countries which did not keep pace with the changing times fell behind and those who changed rose up. Though China is a socialist country, it has adopted commercialization as the foundation of its economic policy.

The 21st century is the century of *artha* and *kama*, wealth and desire. The great ones have said that in Kali Yuga dharma and moksha will be in the second category, artha and kama will be first. Artha means prosperity and kama means desires. This age of desire and prosperity is dawning. If anyone follows dharma and moksha, it will be to attain artha and kama. Artha and kama will be considered the *purusharthas*, the efforts of the new age, and that is why prosperity will be the most important aspect in this age.

You will get a glimpse of this kind of an age in European countries. Do you know that degrees will be awarded in video games by the University of Scotland; there is a department for this now. Like English, Hindi, French, Mathematics or Science, they will be teaching this also. It has started there. They say that by introducing this faculty they have generated lakhs and crores of pounds in their annual income. See the ways by which they bring in prosperity. Once this department is opened, there will be television sets and video games in the university; that is what the students will learn. Then so many sets will be sold, so many chips will be made, they will be programmed, that many number of people will be employed. This is the meaning of prosperity.

The work to make a pen-and-pencil-free culture has already started in America. A child will sit in front of a television set and learn the alphabet. The teacher will just make the child sit there, everything will be taught by the television set – grammar, mathematics and all that. Those people say that the income will go up so much by all this, you cannot imagine it. Americans say that if television enters the classroom, they will have to import TV sets, as they will not be able to produce that many. I will tell you the secret of prosperity. How does prosperity come? Just change the means. After all, your income will be higher if you sell TV sets compared to notebooks and pencils, right?

What I mean to say is that each country will have to seek out ways to increase their wealth. Then it is up to you whether you use that prosperity to indulge or to evolve. You can visit Vaishno Devi, go climb the Everest mountain, make a trip to Mount Kailash, no problem. Prosperity is the means.

Swamiji, our children join us in our business, what do we do in such circumstances?

Tell your children, ‘Here, take the money and go and do business on your own, don’t stay with us.’ Children must do different work independently to make them strong and tough.

But we need hands to help us in the business. Otherwise we will have to employ some other people.

Yes, you should employ others. They will support two, you will support two, in that way four people will be looked after. Any other person can certainly become your manager.

But can another person be trustworthy?

Trustworthy? What are you talking about? To say something like this today implies that there is something wrong in your system. Business does not work on honesty. It is not necessary for your employee to be honest. Today everything works on business and give-and-take. There is a lot of dishonesty in the world, you have to accept this. He is also dishonest and so is the other man, accept this fact and develop a system in which even a dishonest person can work properly.

See all these big companies, how do they work? Where is the head office of the company that makes Boeing airplanes? Seattle, Washington. They are setting up a plant in China where the airplanes will be made. The factory is being managed from Washington, the manager is in China. What if he is dishonest? Dishonesty is a tendency in human beings which manifests in certain conditions and not in others. When a person is well entrenched into a system, there is no opportunity for dishonesty. What happens in banks? Do the cashiers run away with the money? It might happen in a rare instance that the cashier runs away with the money, but after all, where will he run to?

You must create systems in your businesses like this. This system is what we lack here. It is not necessary that your son will be honest. In developed countries, there is a very formal and matter-of-fact relationship between fathers and sons and this is the kind of relationship it should be. The relationship should not be too casual and informal because then disobedience and opposition comes in. In formal relationships there are rules, even in families and between man and wife, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, uncle and nephew. All these relationships are based on formal lines.

One hears that there is a lot of depression in the West.

It appears to be that there is a lot of depression because they take very careful and meticulous census there. Has any census been conducted in the villages and towns here? Then how can you say anything? If a sparrow is born blind, it is abandoned by the mother sparrow and it dies. If any bird or snake is blind, it dies very soon. Now if we say that no bird or snake is blind, it means that we have not undertaken any research or investigation into the causes of this matter. In the same way, we do not conduct any research or census into how much depression exists in our society. During the partition of India and Pakistan, thousands disappeared. What must have been their mental and psychological state?

Families are slowly disintegrating in the West.

Family does not mean that everyone must stay together in the same place, under one roof. Four members of a family may well live in four different places but there should be a connection between them. If it is your child's birthday, your brother will send a birthday card; when there is a wedding in the family, everyone gets together; they meet during festivals, this is what is called family. If there is no feeling of oneness, what kind of brothers are those who fight legal battles with each other, shoot bullets at each other?

Care, concern, sympathy and emotional unity is what is called family, then it matters little if you are living here and your brother lives in America. Without sympathy, without love and emotions, there can be no family. The son is in America, the father lives in Simla. If the father falls ill, the son calls and says, 'Father, why don't you go and get a check-up in Delhi? Or why don't I send you a ticket, please come here.' Isn't this family? The thread that links you and I is what is family, isn't it? Only living in the same house is not called family, this is an incorrect way of thinking. What you are talking about used to be the form of things once upon a time, but now the description of families will change. Mutual sympathy, love and having a feeling for one another will define the form of families now.

When you think about it, there is no difference between European and Indian culture. The only difference is that due to so many invasions in India, some conditions changed. The position of women changed, the restrictions placed on them increased, customs of eating and living changed, attire changed, this changed, that changed. But India will not face any problem in adopting western customs and behaviour. Take a look around you today, is there any difficulty in wearing coats, pants or ties?

What do we call western *sabhyata*, culture? It has some defining characteristics. The first thing is equality between men and women. Whether you have a daughter or a son, they do not differentiate between them, even from legal and social perspectives. A man cannot threaten a woman and if he does so or beats her, the woman has every right to leave him.

The second aspect is independent thinking. Each person has their own thoughts and ideas about god, religion, society, this and that. This kind of independent thinking is not seen that much in India whereas since time immemorial, there have been completely free thoughts about god, about everything in the West.

The third and most important thing is education. The foundation of western civilization is education. It is said in our scriptures that a mother is an enemy and the father is an opponent if they do not educate their children. This principle is the same in western culture too. If the children are not sent to school, the parents are penalized and can even be put in prison. Everyone has to send their children to school, that is the law there. Education has been the foundation of our civilization too since ancient times.

Yanaamnarasyaroopamadhikamprachchhannguptamghanam

Vidyabhogkareeyashahasukhakareevidyagurunnaamguruhu.

Vidyabandhujanovideshagamanevidyaparaadevataa

Vidyaraajasupoojyate na tu dhanamvidyaarviheenaahapashuhu.

Knowledge is the hidden wealth of human beings, the ornament adorning their being. It leads to material

gain, renown and happiness, it is the guru of gurus. It is one's best friend in a foreign land, it is indeed the greatest god. In royal courts, knowledge is respected, not wealth. One without knowledge is verily an animal.

We have always considered Hanuman to be very learned. It is said in the *Hanuman Chalisa*, *Vidyaavaanguneetichaatura* – He was learned, accomplished, very intelligent. Many are intelligent but he was very intelligent. That was why he was in total sync, harmony with Rama. After all, Sri Rama was the epitome of intelligence, the highest among intelligent people. And the highest one chose the one of the highest calibre too.

Education and capability is the hallmark of western civilization. Whether it is the English, the French or the Swiss, those countries which are developed and have prospered, who lead the world in the fields of science, arts and politics – the main reason for that is education and nothing else.

There should be a change towards this direction in our country also. Water that does not flow stagnates and becomes stale. A society which does not change also stagnates and dies. We still lead the kind of life that was led in the 16th century here today. It seems as if many different centuries co-exist simultaneously in India. If you go to Delhi, you will find contemporary culture but in a Santhali village, people are still living in the 16th century.

Many families want to educate their sons, but they run away from it.

There is a reason for that. Each person wants education which suits them. There are three stages in education. The first one is with the mother. Knowledge of the alphabet and basic samskaras, habits or behaviour, are learnt in the lap of the mother. Then the next stage is literacy, where you study language and arithmetic. This literacy and the middle level of education is absolutely essential for everyone, whereby one can read a book, know how to add, subtract, multiply, be able to do small jobs, and earn a living. Whether it is cleaning a

cowshed or working in a poultry farm, working as a mason or as an ironmonger, a person must be able to earn a living. This is the first necessity. Not by cheating or thieving and looting but by dint of sheer effort and hard work, by working anywhere. After that I can give it to you in writing, each child, each boy, each and every boy will definitely want to study. This is a psychological fact. That child will surely think, 'Yes, even I will definitely study.' What the parents are trying to forcibly push into him, will spring up in his mind spontaneously. Why? Because you let the child out into the world and made him independent.

Only an independent man will think for himself. An idiot person cannot think for himself. He is a slave, a servant, a minion. He is not your independent son. But when he makes the effort to study of his own free will that is when his higher education starts. This is exactly what happens in foreign countries. A boy leaves home at fourteen, works at odd jobs and earns a living and then he thinks, 'All right, now I want to study.' That is when he joins university. The education in the universities there is not like it is in India. They don't study throughout the year. He does three months of study in science, then goes and works somewhere, earns some money. Then they take that money and travel to India, Japan or China. They come on cheap tickets, if you overstay by a day, the ticket is no longer valid. They come here and some learn Bharatnatyam, some study yoga, someone learns something else. Then they return and continue their studies.

The truth of the matter is the education given to children should be in keeping with their psychological development. From this perspective, our system of education is not right. In our education system, all kinds of useless things are taught which are of no use in life. When did Aurangzeb die, how many daughters did he have – what are we going to do with this information? What has it got to do with us? A lot of what is taught as part of history and literature has no relevance to our lives. Of all the things that I studied at home and in school, not one has been of any use to me. Yes, whatever

I learnt in my guru's ashram has come in very handy, one hundred percent. Talking with everyone, working hard, cooking for four to five hundred people, arranging for their accommodation, building houses, working in the gardens, looking after cows, typing, answering and making telephone calls, managing day-to-day affairs, I learned everything. I did all that work. Sometimes I think that I came to my guru's ashram at the age of eighteen but, if I had come at the age of six, how wonderful that would have been!

Education should be according to what is needed, but the education we have here is not in keeping with our requirements. Everyone cannot become a doctor, and not everyone can score 80% marks. There are some children who get such marks, they study law and medicine but there are also many children who give up studies as well.

The parents who fret and worry a lot about their children's education do not know anything about child psychology. They make mistakes from the very beginning. Listen, I will tell you a very simple trick. Sell all your property and land, put the money in the bank, you will get 10% interest, buy a small plot of land somewhere and build a small house to live in, spend your time in worship and prayer. Tell your children, 'Go and fend for yourselves'. Everyone will get their act together. The reason why children's heads are not okay is because they know that after their father dies, everything will come to them. That is why they are all lazy and sitting around doing nothing. When they realize that nothing is coming to them when their father dies, their mind-set will surely improve.

The government has made reservations for the backward classes and 70 to 80% of those who don't score high marks do not get admission anywhere.

What's wrong with that? You have not given them any opportunity to progress for many centuries, now you are paying the penalty for that. You say that if a shudra's shadow falls on you, you will go to hell. The lower classes have always been oppressed. They do not get any decent

position anywhere; they have not been given any support to avail of education. So much so that even your womenfolk have not been allowed to study, they are forbidden from reciting the Gayatri mantra. Widows are not allowed to attend auspicious occasions like weddings. Why don't you recognize your mistakes? I accept that you weren't around then and nor was I but our ancestors were, isn't it? It is not your individual fault nor mine, but the fault lies in an entire generation. What you see happening today is a reaction to what happened earlier and there is only one solution to that – social equality. In simple terms, boys and girls from different castes and classes should be joined in marriage. The boy is a doctor, he is a Brahmin, the girl is educated, belongs to another caste, they fall in love, they get married. This is called social equality.

I am not saying that whatever is going on in the name of communalism is right, but I do know that it will happen. There are many gifted people among these classes. There are people from many castes in our ashram whom you would call shudras. Not only in an ashram but also in society, in the field of art and education, there are many accomplished people. I have lived a lot amongst the so-called scheduled castes myself. Though I am not of that caste, I have spent a lot of time living with them. I am conversant with their family systems, their behaviour and all that and I can say this openly that their character is way better than that of the higher castes. They are also in a much better state of health. The strength to bear children is very high among their women.

Who knows since which time they have been called 'lower castes' but their behaviour is of a high standard and their way of thinking is the best. Look at their simple but steadfast faith in god, their innocent devotion towards god. Look at all the saints and poets. Look at Raidas, look at the president of the country today, look at Dr Ambedkar who is the author of the Constitution of India, which is considered to be of an outstanding quality in the world. There is no discrimination in that, it is a very good constitution, I have read it.

That is why I believe that they should not be called lower castes at all. Gandhi used to call them 'Harijan'. He used to hesitate to use the word 'shudra'. There is a description of 'shudra' in our scriptures:

Janmanaajaayateshudrahasanskaaraatdvijauchyate

Everyone is a shudra by birth and they attain a higher position through their samskaras or behaviour, actions, beliefs.

We must think about all these things and then work accordingly. I am not saying that you must force your daughter into wedlock with a butcher. There are good girls and good boys in colleges who belong to different castes. From a genetic perspective, no one is of a high caste or a low caste. This is a political system that has been given to us. The education system has become influenced by the political system and this system of discrimination has come from the education system. Our scriptures speak about castes but that is along the lines of qualities and work. One who runs a shop is of the business class or a *vaishhya*, someone who teaches in a school is a knowledgeable person or a *Brahmin*, a person who works in a factory is a labourer or *shudra*. Castes should only be decided by the kind of profession or work that a person does.

Satsang 8

11 November 1997

Everyone looks at the difficulties they face in life from their own perspective and each one's perspective depends upon their age. I will tell you a true incident. There was a businessman in America who had a clothing factory. It caught fire and was burnt to the ground. He managed to salvage a few things, auctioned them, paid off his loan to the bank and went off into the countryside and started farming. I had spoken to him during that time. He said, "I am not sad about the factory burning down because it was not in my control." He stayed in the countryside for about five or six months and read the newspapers regularly. One day he read that the government was opening over five thousand square miles of land in the State of Arizona to prospect for nuclear fuel like uranium and asking companies and individuals to make enquiries about it, in the same manner in which people look for oil. One company said that those who wished to look for this uranium would be given vehicles, sensor meters and receive expenses for the vehicle like petrol, etc. When the uranium was found, they would receive remuneration according to some specific rate.

That businessman said, "I will go and test my fortune." He got a jeep and a sensor from the company. It was a very huge area and every day he started going from one place to the other. Four to five months passed but the sensors did not read anything. He thought to himself that he would give it another month and then leave. One day he stopped the jeep somewhere, drank some water, ate a sandwich, sat down. It must have been about one or two o'clock. When he got up, he noticed that the sensor was moving. He scanned the entire

area and mapped it thoroughly. That took about one month and then he handed over all his findings to the company. The company sent their specialist technicians and confirmed his findings. He received thousands of dollars as commission which was many times more than the price of his clothing factory.

In one's life, whether in business or in the family, one receives many blows. It is not possible that a person will never face any difficulties in life. Nobody wants problems and troubles; everyone would like to have only prosperity but that is not the law of life. This law governs the physical body, society, nation and business. These problems also affect the physical body. The heart is affected. If the heart is very strong, the lungs can get affected. If the lungs are strong, the kidneys can be affected, if everything is strong maybe the digestion will be affected, something or the other will definitely fall prey to this. As the age increases, the effects also increase.

In such a situation one must do two or three things. The first thing is that one must accept the situation. Whether it is a family-related situation or has to do with one's education or job, first of all you have to accept it. The second thing is at that time you must scale down the way in which you live, simplify your lifestyle. I have seen this in Europe. I have seen millionaires living in small rented flats. I know some people who used to travel from one country to another to do business in their own personal airplanes. Later I saw, they had sold everything and were living in humble surroundings. The children were sent to state-run schools. This means that they lowered their standard of living to make it really light and simple. They then live according to the situation that they are in. The problem with us Indians is that regardless of the situation, we still want to maintain the same standard of living. The first thing that happens as a result of this is that tensions escalate. Therefore, under such conditions, scale down your lifestyle. Start to simplify your diet, slowly reduce your servants and cars, and one by one bring everything down to the minimum.

It is not that one must always be falling lower and lower, facing blow after blow in life. They come to teach us a lesson,

to make us aware of some mistakes we might be making. These situations come to show us where we made erroneous judgements, where we let our systems weaken. These blows are lessons given to us by life. This is how we must think and then simplify our lives. Forget that you were once a millionaire or a big businessman. Think that you belong to an ordinary middle-class family. What will the result be? All the dissatisfactions, regrets and complaints will stop.

Let's say that you are a very big businessman and one day your empire collapses. One son is studying in Simla, another one is in America, the daughter is in a school in Connor, they all have five cars each but here you have nothing. The kitchen cupboard is bare. At such times, fights and squabbles break out in the home. Under these circumstances, if some things are given up, some of the requirements dropped, it will bring peace. In order to stabilize the mind, one's environment and conditions must be brought into balance.

The third thing is that during such times, family members must not blame one another. It must not happen that the son blames the father, the father blames the son, one's brother is blamed, the wife and servant are blamed. Don't try and hold someone responsible for the misfortunes. One has to exercise strict control on oneself. At that time, this way of thinking is very useful that it is not his or her fault but it was written by fate; it is all the will of god. When such a perspective comes in, it makes everything all right. It might not necessarily be the truth but it is a very effective philosophy.

What must one do to save oneself from the blows and misfortunes of life?

That is exactly what I have just told you. When misfortunes strike, simplify your life.

This is after the misfortune comes. But what about some advice for before it strikes?

Assess your life, your business and try and find out if there are any faults, any weaknesses. What is the system you follow for

sales? What about the way you organize your other facilities? Are you paying your workers a lesser wage or not giving them enough bonus? Is there too much competition in the market today?

While running a business, one often faces many blocks and problems from the administration or governmental organizations.

Look, my friend, such problems have been there in every age, and in every age different means have been found to deal with these problems as well. The scriptures say that there is only one way to keep the fear of the king away – *vittam*, meaning money. It is not as if only one person faces these problems, they are faced by everyone. The biggest obstacle which comes between the businessman and the consumer is the administration. This is not just the condition today but has been there across time and in every country. The king will always demand his share. By king I mean the minister, the government official, the tax man, they all take their share, for sure. You cannot put an end to this. Whether you print it in the paper, whether you sue them, this is not going to stop. The allegation of corruption that people make against each other nowadays is simply political propaganda to pull someone down. One thief is calling out against another is like the pot calling the kettle black. Unless I abuse you in public, how can I discredit you in the eyes of everyone and make you unpopular? Unless that happens how can I get the votes? That is all there is to it, you can disregard everything else. Just take it for granted that everyone is corrupt.

Therefore, one should keep the administration happy always. When the administration is kept happy, you even find lost goods because it is very powerful. Don't underestimate or devalue the administration because then you will be troubled by thieves and burglars. It is better that you keep the officials happy rather than have to pay 'protection money' to some thugs or mafia dons. Always remember this.

What should be my goal? Will I ever be able to do anything in life?

Now look here, my dear. This is a question you have to put to yourself. If a person so wishes, they can do everything for themselves, but as long as their hands and legs are in shackles there will be nothing gained by only thinking about all this. People have created such obstructions and blocks for themselves which prevent them from making any successful attempt to reach their goal.

For example?

‘The children have to be looked after, the in-laws or parents have to be served, I have to fulfil the obligations of a husband or a wife’ – these are all ideas that we have taken on which do not have a shred of truth in them. Yes, it is true for those who understand them properly, but you want to do something for yourself. Everyone is doing something, someone is a son, someone is a daughter-in-law or someone is a brother, but if you really wish to achieve something in life or in the area of spirituality then you will have to leave some of these ideas behind. You will have to reduce your responsibilities. ‘I want to become something in life, I will have to put my parents aside’. For those who are starving, sourness or sweetness is not an issue. Whatever you get, you simply eat it.

*Kaamaaturaanaamnabhayamnalajja;
Vidyaaturaanaamnasukhamnanidra.*

A person in the grip of desire disregards fear and shame; one who is eager to attain knowledge abandons the need for happiness and sleep.

In the same way, if one wishes to attain spiritual or material prosperity, many ideas and beliefs will have to be thrown aside. You cannot hope to laugh and have a sulky, sullen face at the same time.

Guruji, how much more will you test me? I am very exhausted.

This is just a psychological idea; it is not a reality. I cannot understand why one is dissatisfied with the present state of things. Why don't people think that whatever they have now is more than enough for them? If happiness is an experience of human life, so is sorrow. Wealth is a condition of life and so is poverty. Why do you always wish to have only happiness and wealth? One saint has said:

*Saachke maathe silpade, naam hriday se jaaye
Balihaari va dikhkee, pal-pal naamrataaye.*

Now this is another idea altogether. The saint is saying, 'Give me sorrow and troubles so that I call the names of the Lord, so that I remember God all the time, so that I can discover the depth of life'. Remember one thing, a man who is happy only stays on the surface of life, but a man who faces sorrow again and again, experiences the full depth of life. The man who is healthy skims the surface, but the man who is sick can plumb the depth of life.

Joys and sorrows come into one's life with as much certainty as do day and night and they will keep coming, no one can stop them. That is why one must train oneself to stay balanced no matter which situation one finds oneself in, joy or sorrow. What training have we received from our parents or our elders? Enjoy happy times and cry in sorrow. This is the training we have received. We have never been told that you should enjoy happiness with a sense of restraint and try to understand yourself in difficult times. Sorrows come as opportunities in which we can learn to understand ourselves. These are times when one can correct one's mistakes. When you make an error in school, the teacher makes a red mark in your notebook and you have to understand what mistake was made. Just like that, sorrow and misfortune are times of self-assessment.

You must remember one thing that no one has a life without happiness and without sorrow. A daily wage labourer

who earns thirty rupees a day also experiences both as does a millionaire. Joys and sorrows are related to the way in which one thinks, according to one's way of thinking. Sri Rama was the Maryada Purushottam, tell me the times when joy came into his life and when did he experience sorrows? When he was born, everyone felt great joy. At the age of seven, he went to live in the gurukul. There he slept on the bare ground, tended his guru's cows, served his guru-mother, ploughed the fields, this is what he did until he was twelve years old. When he returned home, he went on foot accompanying Vishwamitra to Janakpuri. Along the way, at one time he fought with Taraka, at other times he had to clash with Marichi and Subahu. He married Sita and brought her back, thinking he would live a peaceful and contented life, and become the crown prince. But he ended up being exiled, not just for two or three years, for fourteen long years, and that too in those times. In today's age even if you take a vehicle and a tent and go into exile, you will find it hard. In those times, he had nothing with him.

The most difficult and sorrowful time was when Sita was abducted. In that age, it was believed that if a man's wife was abducted, he should cut off his nose. Ravana abducted Sita and this brought great dishonour upon Rama. It was a matter of great insult and loss of face. All his glory and honour fell into the mud. A prince of the Raghuvanshi dynasty and someone takes off with his wife? What kind of a warrior is he that he cannot protect even his own wife? This was the tragedy that befell him. After that he had to wage a war with a terrible and wicked man. When he returned victorious, there were a few days of happiness. Then there was an accusation against Sita. Their love was very deep but according to the customs and systems of society at that time, they had to be separated. So this is an example of the trials and tribulations faced by a great person during his life.

The other example is Krishna. Even before he was born, his name was on the hit list of Kamsa. You know the story that ensues. What happened in the end? Sri Krishna was killed. He had many enemies in his life. Jarasandha, Shishupal, Rukmi,

the entire Hastinapur clan were all his enemies. In the end he was killed and before his death the entire Yadu clan was wiped out. What greater tragedy can there be that a father's sons are all killed and he is still alive.

I am giving these examples to understand sorrows and joys. One fact that you must all accept is joy and sorrow are as much part of life as day and night. The only question which arises is what kind of training have you received or what kind of philosophy of life have you made for yourself? Are you afraid of sorrow or do you face it head on? What is the relationship you have with happiness and joy? If a man wishes that sorrows do not become too hard to bear, he must decide the extent of his relationship with joy? You have a lot of money, you can fly in an airplane, live in palaces, you can do anything. You have to understand what you will do and what you will not do. Happiness attained on the strength of money also becomes the cause of sorrow later. Happiness does not lie in wealth. Those who think that money is everything, they are wrong.

The most developed and prosperous country in the world is Sweden. The best government, the best social welfare system is believed to be in Sweden today, but it also has the highest rate of suicide in the world. That is why I say that happiness is not such a good thing that we should long for it so much and neither is sorrow so bad that we are always afraid of it. People who have a lot of money, are wealthy and have all the means at their disposal must set aside a part for the poor and give it through the medium of some organization or institution. The Ramakrishna Mission is a good institution; there are many other ashrams like this. Another thing, one must live like a poor person oneself. Live in dharamshalas, go on pilgrimages. That is why we have so many pilgrimage centres. In earlier times, it was difficult to go to these places. They used to say that if you managed to go to Badrinath, you seldom returned, that is how difficult it used to be.

One portion of your money for religious works, one portion for philanthropy, one portion for the nation, one

portion to take your business further and keep one portion aside for your children. There are many such things that we can learn from western countries. They have such customs there. When a person dies in those countries, they don't leave everything to their sons. No, they draw up a will with their lawyer in which they leave their wealth to some religious institutions, orphanages, hospitals, centres for the handicapped or a library. This is the reason why their children are independent and can stand on their own two feet. They know that they are not going to get anything from their father. By the time the children become fourteen years of age, they are told that now they are grown up and must learn to fend for themselves. They go out and find a house to live in, work in a poultry farm or clean the streets, earn a living somehow or study further. They don't come back home except to visit their parents once in a while.

In a culture in which people are self-reliant, people are able to bear the varying fortunes of joy and sorrow. Those children who have an easy life and live off their parents' wealth get heart attacks when the money is gone. They feel, 'Oh my god! Now I will not be able to wear those fashionable clothes, the creams and lotions will not be available anymore, how will I watch videos?' These are all useless things. Nowadays affluence is coming in very fast whereas we have been quite poor until recently. In the dazzle and glamour of wealth and prosperity, we have forgotten that joy and sorrow are just a state of mind. Money has nothing to do with this. Don't millionaires experience sorrow? Sorrow and joy are only individual experiences and ideas; they do not have any bearing on reality.

I have always felt that people in the whole world only think about themselves. Even saints and mahatmas only think about their own *moksha*, liberation, but no one pays any heed to the joys and sorrows of others. There are so many lame people in the world, lepers too. Nobody thinks about them; people only think about themselves.

Recently Princess Diana of England died. It became sensational news all over the world. Not only because she was a princess but also because she was a very compassionate person, full of care and sympathy for those who are suffering. You people are only concerned about which man she was involved with, but you don't care to acknowledge that she supported and worked for so many charitable institutions the world over. She auctioned all her personal belongings – shoes, clothes, jewellery, everything – and gave away the thousands of dollars they fetched to charities from Africa to the Philippines, she encouraged and inspired so many institutions.

In this Kali Yuga, the greatest virtue is that of philanthropy. Someone's personal character is irrelevant, but what is important is how much good you have done for others. However good a person you are, what value does it have unless you are of use and help to others? In today's age, if a man is not of any use to another person, he is without character; he has no redeeming virtues: this is the message for these times. This was Mahatma Gandhi's message, wasn't it? What has Tulsidas written in the *Ramacharitamanas*? There are only two things of any value in Kali Yuga, chanting the Lord's name and doing good to others, *parahitasarisa dharma nahin bhai*. Apart from these two things, nothing else will be of any use to you.

Whether you are vegetarian or non-vegetarian, whether you wear trousers or a dhoti that has no meaning for us. Tell us what it is that you are doing for others, how many tears of sorrow have you helped to wipe away, how many people have you helped to emancipate and become self-reliant? You might not be able to give legs to a lame person, but you can buy a tricycle for him so that he can be mobile and seek some kind of work, earn a few thousands rupees and support his wife and children. Why don't these kind of thoughts enter your mind? I say that a man may be wicked, of bad conduct, a thief or a gambler, but if he is of help to others, he is the saint of this age. Your life is of no worth unless you can be of use to another. What meaning does your personal life have for us? Listen my dear, here we are starving and there you

are gorging on delicious sweets! When a mother eats, her thoughts go to what her son must be eating in his boarding school. Then why is it that she cannot think like that about others? The greatest virtue is in thinking about others and the worst quality is thinking only about oneself.

Swamiji, between Gandhi and Godse, the children of today seem to prefer Godse.

No, that is not so. They must be saying something like that to you, but Godse was not the kind of person whom one can admire or worship. Whereas what Gandhi gave to India and the world, no one has been able to give. He gave a philosophy of life and his own life was an example of that teaching. It was because of him that people paid attention to Harijans. Upliftment of Harijans, upliftment of untouchables, emancipation of villagers, widow remarriage, basic elementary education – he gave so many things. Godse was a socially reactive episode. Mahatma Gandhi must have made mistakes, but we do not have the right to judge those mistakes.

We should only concern ourselves with one thing: did he made human beings care about other human beings or not. Yes, without any doubt, he certainly did. This is what Gandhi used to say – think about others as well. This is what is written in the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*. All our scriptures have stressed only this one point that man should be of help to another. A cow is of use to others, a horse is of use to others, trees are of use to others, but man is only of use to himself. The funny thing is that after he dies, not even a single thing is going to be of any use to anyone. When a cow dies, at least shoes can be made from the skin. When a man dies, one ends up needing wood to burn him.

This is why the very first thing we need to throw light on is that each person has a responsibility towards another. A philanthropist will be recognized in this Kali Yuga, not a *brahmachari*. In this age, a person like Gandhi will be recognized who sacrificed his life for others. No one is going

to ask whether you eat meat, whether you keep a tuft of hair on your head or wear the sacred thread, whether you are a Shaivite or belong to the Shakta sect, whether you are a Hindu or Muslim, whether you have one wife or two. No one will ask any of this except that you must be of use to another. If a poor child has potential, provide for his education, give a cow to a cowherd, a wheel to a potter, so many small acts of philanthropy can be performed.

India is a very poor and backward country. India is not Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay or Madras. India is where I live. seventy percent of India is exactly like it is where I live. Everyone knows that India is primarily an agricultural country. The majority of its population depends upon agriculture, not technology. Farmers and labourers who live in the villages are very self-reliant. If they are given even a little help, they will go very far. They have an incredible ability for survival. We only pray to god that they don't get wealth but prosperity. There is a big difference between wealth and prosperity. What is prosperity for a farmer? Water, seed, fodder, bullocks, fields. What is prosperity for a labourer? That he be able to earn a daily wage of forty to fifty rupees.

Respect for women

There are many forms of shakti worship in the tantra shastras. Worship of Devi has its own place, but I have always had feelings of respect and empathy towards womankind and that is why here we have decided to offer special wedding gifts to newly-wed brides. Since the time I came to live here, every year we have distributed about fifty to one hundred such sets. This year there will be even more. If you look at each set, you will be stunned. You might not have given so much to your own daughter when she got married. It is worth at least forty to fifty thousand rupees, sometimes it goes up to even one lakh and a half.

I have never concealed my relationship with women. After all, the woman who has been our mother, our sister or daughter, the relationship with them is from birth to death, it

should be from the cradle to the grave. The people of India must change the way they think about womankind. Woman's education is much more important than that of a man. If anyone in our society needs to be disciplined, it is men. They are the ones who have gone astray, women have not.

Women's education must be of the highest quality. She must go out and work, regardless of whether she is the daughter of a millionaire or a poor labourer. Not to earn money but to make contact with society, to learn about society and to make her contribution towards society too. The love, care, nurturing quality, sympathy and intelligence that women have should not only be limited to the family but society should also benefit from it. Society has only received the arrogance of men which is why wherever there is a male-dominated society, things are in a terrible state, and wherever women have come forward in society, they have improved it, taken care of it because women are a form of Lakshmi. From the day she was born, she has brought beauty and gentleness to the home. When she went from your home to another home, she did not go empty-handed but loaded with bag after bag. No girl goes to her in-law's house empty-handed, not even the daughter of a beggar.

What have you done for this girl? You have only thrust the burden of a hundred rules and laws upon her. When a man becomes a widower, he continues to wear the same clothes, but when a woman becomes a widow she can only wear white. What kind of a law is that? Even though a man is a widower, he participates in all auspicious celebrations and activities, but when a woman is widowed, she cannot attend any auspicious function. What kind of social law is this? She who did not come to your home empty-handed, who left her own home and hearth and came to live in your house, why do you hold such negative attitudes towards her? You have made so many horrible laws that she has to abide by, and that too by invoking the names of wise seers and holy men!

After all, which sage or seer has said all this? In fact, they have said *yatranaaryastupoojayante ramantetatradevataha* – the

gods abide where women are respected. They have not said anywhere that where women are worshipped, there is only destruction. In fact, the thing to note here is that seers or sages have never said Rama-Sita or Krishna-Radha even by mistake. The woman's name always comes first. Even in your names, like Sri Goenkaji, 'Sri' is the name that comes first. First is the girl, then your name follows, isn't it?

We have always had *swayamvars*; *swayamvar* means choosing one's own bridegroom. But our society has been enslaved for a long time, and because of outside influences, many changes came about. Today I tell everyone that a girl must choose her own husband. A girl must also have the appropriate ability to make this choice. She must have intelligence, discrimination, she should see the world and know things for herself. This is why we have to make sure that girls are capable of doing this. The family will flourish only because of her.

Now almost all over the world, there is an open attitude towards girls. Everywhere people want girls to be able to manage good jobs, take on responsible positions in society, enter the political arena, work in industry, become managers in business enterprises and move ahead in the field of education. Whenever a woman becomes prime minister or president of a country, this receives a lot of respect. Now the prime minister in New Zealand is a woman. The president of Sri Lanka is a woman, also in Ireland and Bangladesh. People have begun to accept that we must ensure that women receive their legitimate rights. Giving women their legitimate rights means fulfilling our debt to our mothers. When have you ever paid your debts to your mothers? That debt will be paid only when women will receive education in our society, when they become learned. When you see women in the courts, in the army, when women are sitting in the legislative assembly – this should be the dream of every Indian. Without this, do not even think about any progress in this country. In the house where a woman does not progress, in such a house progress is only hypocrisy. It is a woman who safeguards the boundaries, not a man.

Satsang 9

12 November 1997

The real meaning of the word ‘Brahmin’

In ancient times, accomplished and gifted people in our society were called ‘Brahmin’ and these Brahmins lived exemplary lives of a very high quality. Some of them were householders and some did not marry. They lived on alms, did not own any wealth and strictly observed all the prescribed laws. These Brahmins were of two types. Some were Brahmins by birth and some were *dvija*, who were born into other castes but received initiation a second time as Brahmins. *Dvija* means twice-born, someone who receives a second initiation. *Upanayan* or *yajnopavit* (the sacred thread worn by Brahmins) is a very essential aspect of this second initiation. After this ceremony, twelve years have to be spent in a gurukul where the Vedas are studied and mastered.

*Janmanaajaayateshudraha, sanskaaraatdvijauchyate,
Vedapaathhibhavetvipraha, brahmajaanaatibrahmanaha.*

Everyone is a shudra at birth, through samskaras he is known as a dvija. One who chants Vedas becomes a vipra and one who knows Brahma is a Brahmin.

Brahma refers to the Vedas, though in later times, Brahma came to mean the divine. In ancient times, when Brahma was mentioned in the Vedas, it meant Vedas. Therefore, one who knows the Vedas was known as a Brahmin. Those Brahmins were of such an incredibly high standard that they had the power to pronounce curses on people. Even if they cursed

someone by mistake, it would come true. You must have read the story of Pratapbhanu in the *Ramacharitamanas* who had to bear a terrible curse put on him by Brahmins.

King and governance

Pratapbhanu's mistake was that he made a deal with a wicked king who met him in the guise of a holy man. A king is not supposed to act in that manner. According to the rules of governance, a king only has the right to perform actions suitable for one who is the head of a council. Political intrigues, the games of statehood and other such privileges only belong to the prime minister or ministers. The king cannot take any action or decision in regard to carrying out some intrigue or ploy, killing someone, attacking another kingdom, meeting anyone in secret or speaking to someone on any other matter. The meaning of the word *raja* or king is one who is enthroned, who is the ruler. The king only rules over the court. The ministers are the ones who negotiate, confer and pass resolutions, the king only has to say 'yes'. He only offers opinions or gives his consent, that is why the king is just like a rubberstamp, nothing more. Since ancient times, the kings were kshatriyas, warriors, and the ministers were always Brahmins because they had to be very sharp. They always abide by the rules and regulations and do not dance to the king's tune. The king was expected to indulge in pleasures and live in luxury, all he had to do was sign on the dotted line, the Brahmins decided upon everything.

Pratapbhanu's mistake was that he came to a secret understanding with that wicked person which is something a king must not do and that is why he was cursed. If he had told his minister, Dharmaruchi, what had taken place in the jungle, the royal priest had been changed, that would have been another matter. His son had no idea, nor had his wife, no one knew what he had done. The king had agreed with the 'muni' (a wicked man who was in the guise of a holy man) that he would kidnap the royal priest and become the royal priest himself. This was a kind of intrigue, a secret ploy. Why

should the king not have made this secret understanding? He told the 'muni' that he wanted to become an all-powerful ruler and this was the path suggested to him by the 'muni'. The king should have said that he would discuss the matter with his minister, that they would come to a decision together and that the muni should also come along, but he acted on his own individual initiative. He returned quietly to the palace and everyone thought that he had come back after his forest sojourn. Apart from him, not another soul knew anything about this.

A king does not have the right to take any royal decision on his own. It is not possible even in a republic. According to all political systems, a king or ruler does not have the right to take any independent decision, and when one has such powers it is called dictatorship, tyrannical rule or uncontrolled power. In such a system, all decisions are taken by one single person alone.

Taking the decision all by himself was the biggest mistake made by Pratapbhanu. This was the greatest flaw in his character which also manifested in Ravana. Ravana was exactly like this. Before deciding to abduct Sita, he should have consulted ten to fifteen people. When he approached Marichi for help, he was turned down. Ravana threatened and intimidated Marichi who agreed because he was afraid that he might be harmed by Ravana. Later when Mandodari heard about it, she tried to make Ravana see the folly of his ways, but he did not heed her words. Malyavant also advised him, but Ravana ignored this as well. Vibhishana tried to make him understand, but Ravana did not agree with him at all. His grandfather, Rishi Pulastya, also sent him a letter, even his words were not taken seriously. He was fiercely headstrong and it was impossible to get him to pay heed to anyone. The same traits which Pratapbhanu had were also present in Ravana.

Despite Marichi recognizing Sri Rama as a divine avatar, why did he still call out to Lakshman and Sita in Rama's voice to mislead them?

Even though a husband and wife know that they have to live together, why is there still bickering every now and then? Even though they know, it still happens. It is a particularly strong trait among humans that despite having knowledge, they remain ignorant. No one is an exemption to this rule. Even though he knows everything, he still lives a life of ignorance. Everyone says that God is the one who makes everything happen, life and death is beyond man's power. Everyone knows this, everyone believes this to be the truth, but when it comes down to practical living, all this knowledge fails. When someone falls ill, why do people feel afraid? Because of ignorance. When there is death in the family, why do people mourn and weep? This has nothing to do with the reality of things, it is related to pure ignorance. Night follows day, day follows night, after the autumn comes spring, spring is followed by autumn again, everyone knows this, but when a misfortune visits the home, everyone is de-railed, they go totally off the tracks. Husband and wife know that they have to live together yet they fight every day. People know that alcohol destroys all sense, even the one who drinks knows this, but yet he drinks.

This contradiction between knowledge and ignorance keeps playing out in man's life. Despite knowing that Sri Rama is the Divine Incarnate and that he should warn Sri Rama about the plan to abduct Sita, he did not do anything like that because he was in the grip of ignorance. This is the main reason. The other thing is that even though man has a little bit of knowledge, understanding or intelligence for some time, it does not last. The intelligence is not unbroken but fragmented. Look at your own lives, I am not saying anything unusual. If that knowledge remains unbroken and continuous, man will not make mistakes. This is not possible because man's mind is very fickle and dissipated; it is not able to stay steady and balanced all the time. Like the voltage in

our power supply sometimes is 230 volts, other times it is 210 and sometimes it is also 240, in the same manner, a man's mind fluctuates and sometimes it also blows a fuse!

The truth of the matter is that it is not enough for man to have knowledge. Everyone has knowledge, when you try to explain something to another person, how well you do it! But when you need to understand things yourself, you are unable to do so. *Par upadesh kushal bahutere* – 'when you are explaining anything to someone else, you are so proficient'. Man knows everything, he knows that death is unavoidable; he also knows that the cause of death can be anything. He also knows that wealth and poverty are like day and night. He also knows that *karma gatitaarena tare* – 'the momentum of karma can neither be delayed nor averted'. Man knows all this but when he faces difficult situations, he wishes that it will be different. Why? Because man's greatest weakness or most peculiar quality is that he wants *paramananda*, eternal happiness and complete deliverance from sorrow. This is man's essential nature; it is his dharma.

Paramananda means endless happiness. Man wishes to enjoy the kind of happiness that has no barriers or blocks. Along with that, he doesn't just want relief from sorrow for a little while, he wants to remove it altogether and be totally free from sorrow. The desire to attain paramananda and complete eradication of sorrow – this is the nature of *jiva*. What do we call *jiva*? That little essence of the divine which is within you – *Ishwar ansha jiva avinaasi, chetan amal sahaj sukh raasi*. Its natural form is happiness. Now, until such time that man does not reach that point, until he does not unite with that divine essence which is within him, the experience of eternal happiness is not possible. Parmamanada is not an attainment, it is an experience. In the same manner, sorrow and happiness are not attainments, they are experiences. Happiness is the name of one experience, sorrow is a name of another experience. People say that death brings sorrow. No, death does not cause sorrow. If that was true, we would not be able to live at all because lakhs of people die every

day. Someone dies in a bus accident, someone dies because of a bomb, another one commits suicide. Do you people cry every day? No, death is not the cause of sorrow, it becomes the cause of sorrow when it is related to your experience. Your experience is limited by *mamta*, personal attachment. Mamta is the wire that ties you to others. It is this mamta which believes that death is the cause of sorrow and pushes this idea into your head. That is the truth of the matter.

Whenever any incident takes place in a person's life, always remember this one fact – that incident has a connection with his life in some way or another. Whether you are able to understand this or not, simply accept the fact that each incident is somehow or the other connected with something. Marichi had a relationship with Ravana and he also had a relationship with Sri Rama. Why did he play his role in the abduction of Sita? There is a mathematical precision to karmas which is always absolutely right. According to this, even if the divine incarnates in a human body, the dharma of the body has to be fulfilled. If the son of a millionaire acts the part of a beggar in a film, he has to play the role in its entirety. At that time, he cannot think that he is the son of a millionaire. In the same way, when the divine incarnates in human form, the laws of dharma belonging to the human body, society and country will have to be adhered to and followed. That is why Rama had to follow the dictates of the prescribed boundaries and sacrifice Sita, even though it was considered to be inappropriate. He had to kill Taraka even though she was a woman and according to the rules, a woman cannot be killed. He had to destroy Ravana even though according to the scriptures, Ravana was indestructible, he was a Brahmin after all.

The dharma of life is dictated by situations, the country and the age. Krishna came, he was endowed with everything but even he was not free from karma. In the *Gita*, he says so himself – *gahana karmano gathihi*. The science of karma is very deep, it's unfathomable. Marichi recognized the divinity of Rama, he even tried to dissuade Ravana from abducting Sita.

Yet, why did he act according to Ravana's wishes? Couldn't he have given some hint to Sita that he was not really a golden deer? What happened to his intelligence, to his sense? All he had to say to Sita was, 'I am an imposter', that would have done the job. He would not have needed to run so far. Or he could have said to Rama, 'Don't kill me, I am actually Marichi in disguise'. But no, he did not say anything. After all, what was it that blocked his intelligence? It is karma which decides on man's intelligence. It is said in the *Ramacharitamanas* – *sumati kumati sab keura rahahi*. Each one has good sense and bad judgement but at some point good sense takes precedence and at other times, it is just the opposite.

Instead of getting married now, I would like to pursue higher studies in Sanskrit. What are the opportunities in this field?

Scholars from India and abroad are conducting research into vedic civilization and culture and all the sources of ancient traditions, history and scriptures are written in the Sanskrit language. Scholars from China, Russia, America and Japan conduct research in many of the universities in India. They all come for research and receive a lot of support and help from our universities. When they come, they engage someone well-read in Sanskrit, whether it is a man or a woman. Let us assume that somebody is conducting research into the Soma Yajna from the *Rig Veda*. Now someone who knows Sanskrit will translate the texts for them and receive remuneration for their work. Such students and scholars of Sanskrit are registered with the research projects and departments in some of the universities, meaning that they are not tied down to a regular job but are independent. When there is a need, letters are sent out to them saying that they should contact such a person from such-and-such country who wishes to conduct some research. After that, the Sanskrit scholar translates the necessary texts for them into English, French or German. Many of our sannyasin brothers live in Kashi and are associated with the university there. They all have their

own huts or live in some math. When the researcher arrives, a message is sent to them, 'Swamiji, please come'. The swami is given the requisite material and he types the translation and gives it to them. Amongst our sannyasins, there are many learned sannyasins who know English as well as other foreign languages. They receive four to five thousand rupees for this work. They live comfortably in their huts and instead of seeking alms here and there, they stay in one place and sing kirtan to the Divine. What I mean to say is that those who know Sanskrit can put it to good use, but they must make contact with the people in universities.

As to the question of marriage, it is my opinion that married life is a religious institution and also necessary for society. It is also a natural necessity for human beings. This natural necessity has been given a particular form by society, I am willing to accept that, but today I am not willing to accept that this is the only choice available to a girl. Life must have a support or a foundation and in earlier times, marriage was one such support to life. In those days there were no other options available to girls, but today there are two choices open to them, there are two paths which can be pursued – education and independence. Not just these two, but very soon there is a third option also opening up for them – the fulfilment of their personal ambitions. Don't girls have ambitions? Do only men have the privilege of having ambitions? Are their brains different? No, even girls have ambitions and they exist as much in them as they exist in boys. Due to historical, social and political reasons we have prevented the development of these ambitions. Okay, you may not have any ambitions but your daughter certainly has them. It is possible that she may not voice them, but would she not wish to receive a grant of forty to fifty thousand dollars from some university to go and conduct research in France? Does she not want to travel around the world for four or five years?

Do not consider the lives of girls as different from that of boys based on these social constraints. This is an incorrect understanding. What is the social reason for this? You know

what life was like in the Middle Ages? A girl had to be married off by the time she was twelve or thirteen years old. The red dot had to be placed upon her forehead so that the stamp of marriage could be put on her. All this had to be done, but when we surrender to situations and accept defeat, a new age cannot be created. If we wish to usher in a new age, we cannot bow down to existing situations. Today, things are changing, they have already changed. Society has accepted this fact. What I am saying is that society has given thought to uplifting the position of women. Society must understand this fact that the household runs on two wheels. If one of the wheels has a hole in it, the vehicle cannot run smoothly.

The ideas which we have about marriage are not those that were held by the vedic civilization but are remnants of the influence of foreign cultures. Vedic civilization and culture has always held independence and self-reliance in high esteem. There has been independent thinking about religion too. Some said there is only one god, some say there are 33 crore gods and goddesses, some say there are ten avatars or incarnations implying that there have been many different streams of thought and all of them were accepted. It is written in the scriptures of vedic dharma that a girl has the right to choose her own husband. The right to marriage, the duty to get married lies with the girl and not with her parents. We are very familiar with the word *swayamvar*, is it necessary to translate it? Even an idiot knows what it means. But how will a girl be able to choose? She is not educated, she is ignorant, then how will she choose? The right for *swayamvar* lies only with a girl who is accomplished, who is educated, who understands everything.

That is why it is of utmost importance to first of all ensure that girls receive education. Then they should have the opportunity to work at good jobs. Along with that, married life is also necessary. I am not saying that there should not be marriage, after all it is the law of nature. God has made this law that man and woman live together; and this natural law has been given the form of marriage by society. The scriptures say

that there are desires in the mind of everyone. Which desires? The desire for progeny is something that exists in everyone. There is also a desire for wealth and prosperity. There should be rice, flour, pots and pans, sugar, tea, oil, money, jewellery, clothes in every home. These desires are normal. After all, even a rat looks for grain, doesn't it? The union of man and woman is also a natural desire and the desire for success is also in everyone. You want to be recognized by your neighbours, do you want it or not? This is not a social thing, it is a very natural thing which is called *loka kamana*, the desire to be recognized as having worth and value by others. We want to become ministers, we wish to go to London to do PhD, such god-given desires are in the minds of everyone. Don't you have such desires in your mind? Whether you have attained them or not, they must have been in your mind at some time or the other, isn't it? It is not only men who dream, women also have dreams. Dreams are seen by the poor as well as the wealthy. Good people, bad people, wicked people – everyone has dreams. Move ahead with this natural dharma along with your children, maybe some out of them may become another Gandhi or a Newton.

Creativity and intoxicants

I will tell you something about a man from America. He was a very ordinary person but he had a talent. He knew how to make pictures, he could draw beautiful pictures. In 1968 I happened to meet him. He said, 'Swamiji, I would like to draw you'. I said, 'Okay, go ahead'. This happened in New York. He was a boy of eighteen or twenty, a hippie sort-of fellow. He drew my picture and did it really well. Whenever I laugh, you would have noticed that I have a particular kind of smile. He captured that and drew it in the picture. Everyone's faces are similar but each person has some special distinguishing feature or characteristic. The police understand this very well. A person might change their guise, but this particular feature will be spotted.

I said to him, 'You are a very special person'. He used to take LSD. You know what that is? It is a kind of intoxicant, after

taking it one begins to have experiences like Kakabhushundi, Akrura, Yashoda or what Arjuna experienced in the eleventh chapter of the *Gita*. There can also be accidents with this. Some people had such experiences that they leapt off the twentieth or thirtieth storey of a building. They feel that there is a road ahead of them, great illusions take place. He was brought to me by an Indian mahatma who was originally from Aligarh, his name was Ramamurti Mishra. He is no more now, he has dropped the body. He used to be a neurosurgeon in a hospital in New York, he had stopped practising medicine but stayed on there. He used to teach Sanskrit, Vedanta and yoga like sadhus do. This boy was introduced to me by him. I told that boy that he should develop this art. He asked me if he should stop taking LSD. I said that taking it or leaving it was his wish, I don't know about good and bad, but what I did know is that he had the talent to capture these subtle things and he should continue in this field.

He did so and today he is one of the most acclaimed artists in America. His name is Peter Max and he is not only acclaimed but is a millionaire as well. He has Rolls Royce cars. Some years ago, during an international conference on the environment, he bagged the contract to make all the pictures for the advertisements. This meant that he had thousands of artists working according to his instructions. He was given the contract to make all the pictures depicting the environment. Many great world leaders had gone there. Think about it! A young boy had his own dreams, he also had the capability and one person just told him, 'Do this' and he caught onto that!

Now you will have to listen very carefully to what I am going to say. Intoxicants are bad, it is written in ayurveda, it is written in the scriptures. It says so everywhere, but what do the yoga shastras say about it? Yoga shastras discuss *siddhis*, special attainments and abilities. What is the description of a siddhi? It is expressing the creativity hidden within your mind. Like lightning manifested out of water, like nuclear energy was created out of uranium, like coal was

brought out from the coal mines, butter was made from milk and fire manifested out of wood. In the same way, there is a creative ability hidden within your mind which can be accessed by five means, according to the yoga shastras. One of those means is aushadhi. Anyone who has read the yoga philosophy of Patanjali will understand what I am referring to: *Janmaushadhimantratapahasamaadhijahasiddhyaha* – Through mantra, austerity and making the mind one-pointed siddhis can be attained and this state can also be created with aushadhi. Now what is this aushadhi?

The most ancient aushadhi was somaras. In those days, there was a creeper called soma. Until the period of the waxing moon reaching its fullness, its petals would unfold one by one and then after the full moon, they would start to drop off. Those creepers would be taken down from around the trees, filled into earthen pots and buried under the ground. They also used to add other things to it and it used to ferment, like the juice of grapes. That was used to make sharaab. I am using the word sharaab, fermented water is called *sharaab*. *Aab* means water, *shar* means fermented. They used to drink that and in those times, only Brahmins used to drink it. I have already explained the meaning of Brahmin to all of you. Earlier only renunciates and austere Brahmins used to drink somaras, who used to exercise *sanyam* or restraint over themselves. Later when everyone started consuming somaras, it slowly became extinct.

In the modern age, in the two countries of America and Holland they first found out that one can manufacture such a drug which can anaesthetize the senses and expand the mind and brain. Amongst these people was an American by the name of Timothy Leary. He was a very learned scholar and he made many experiments with LSD, and Americans began to take that drug in large numbers. As a result of this, the hippie community was born. These hippies did not wish to lead ordinary lives. They were musicians, singers, dancers, they did not differentiate between men and women. They ate anything, ate anywhere, sat down anywhere, slept anywhere.

This gave birth to a very liberated and carefree culture. But the government there tried to control them by making strict laws. Timothy was chased out of America and he ran away to Switzerland. Dr Ramamurti Mishra, about whom I was telling you earlier, was a very good friend of Timothy. He was also expelled and when he met me later in London, he told me the whole story.

When people saw that the government was harassing them a lot, they said let us simply smoke *ganja*, cannabis. Ganja became popular and spread throughout the world. It spread so much that today there is no country where it hasn't reached. In some countries there is pressure on the governments to legalize it. A lot of research is being done to find out how many diseases can be benefited by cannabis. Most of it comes from Mexico, also from Nepal. There is no hashish left in Afghanistan. People there have made so much money that they have bought tanks and planes and are fighting with each other.

The main reason for this rampant spread in western countries is that they have latched on the word 'aushadhi' from the yoga shastras. They believe that all persons need intoxication to some degree, either it is taken externally or it is produced within. You may ask how this can be produced within the body. Scientists have researched into it and so have I. As the state of dhyana deepens, a particular hormone is produced within the body called histamine. It goes into the blood stream and produces an effect which is similar to what is experienced after consuming alcohol. Don't they say that Babaji is blissed out? Well, where does that bliss come from? When you see an alcoholic or a drug addict, you say that they indulge in intoxicants. About one it is said that they are addicts and about another you say that he is blissed out, but it is the same thing.

The percentage of histamine in the blood is very little. Not a spoonful, not even a drop but as much water as can be found on the tip of a needle is produced when one goes into the deeper states of dhyana or after chanting *Sri Ram Jaya*

Ram Jaya Jaya Ram Ram for three or four hours. Scientists maintain that it is necessary for people to have some degree of intoxication, if this goes down too much then a person can suffer from high blood pressure and the risk of heart attacks also goes up. That is why nowadays there is a lot of pressure to legalize cannabis. It is still not legal and the main reason is that alcohol is a very big industry. Cannabis is very cheap, you can buy it for a few rupees, but a bottle of alcohol costs at least a couple of thousand rupees. Now, will you drink something that costs a few thousand rupees or take something which is available for just a few rupees? After all, there are people who don't earn very much. Nevertheless, there is a lot of pressure on the governments now and I think that in the next twenty years or so, cannabis will become legal everywhere.

Here in India there has been no restriction on sadhus and mahatmas smoking ganja. Many sadhus, mahatmas and naga babas go to Nepal, why? There they can get ganja for free. There two things are given by the king free of cost, wood and ganja. I don't know if it is still available or not, I haven't been to Nepal for many years. The point I am making is that ganja or bhang are not bad. It becomes bad when you do not know the reason for its uses. After all, the *angrezidava* or allopathic medicine that you take, what is it? There must be very few such medicines which do not have any intoxicating substance or are completely free from alcoholic ingredients. There is alcohol even in some ayurvedic medicines like *kumara aasav*. There is alcohol in all these medicines and this is something that has existed since olden times.

There are certainly some harmful effects in all these things. After all, the difference between poison and ambrosia lies in the way it is used. If it is used in one way, it is poison and if it is used in another, it is ambrosia. What is the remedy for snake bite? Snake venom. The poison is obtained from snakes, then it is made into a serum and filled into medical ampoules. That is called anti-venom serum. Only poison can combat poison. The difference lies in how it is used, nothing else.

Rural life

The foundation of Indian culture is agriculture and agriculture-related hard work. What is this work? Ploughing the field, transplanting the shoots, removing the grass, harvesting the crop, rearing animals – this is all agriculture-related work. More than seventy percent of India's population is directly involved in this work. It is a very difficult task to try and effect a technological change in a country where more than seventy percent of its people are involved in agriculture because it requires a lot of capital investment and you don't have that kind of money. Our people know a lot about agriculture. They get at least two square meals a day from it.

The dilemma today is that neither educated people nor political leaders or the government is paying any attention in this direction. You have the money to build stadiums and libraries, there are funds to construct memorials to political leaders, in the name of spreading Indian culture to foreign countries you have money to spend on song and dance, but when it comes to digging tube wells in a village or making ponds and reservoirs, there is no money. Here in the villages there is no need for technology, all they need is just one thing – water.

There is very modern tissue culture available, but if you cannot give that, if you cannot provide modern fertilizers at least make it possible for each farmer to have access to irrigation facilities and not be dependent on the gods for rain – then just see how India will leave the rest of the world far behind! No country will be able to compete with it. This country can progress very fast because the farmers are a very contented lot. If they can meet their annual needs from one harvest, buy few sets of clothes for the children during Diwali or Dusshera and make a little jewellery for their daughters every two or four years, that's all they want, they do not need very much. They can use worn-out footwear or even go barefoot, they can sleep on the ground, mosquitoes don't bother them. After all, a thief will only go where they can steal something. Mosquitoes will bite those who have blood.

These poor people have so little blood that even mosquitoes don't bite them. All the mosquitoes have migrated to the cities to bite all you city folks. Even the crows don't live here, they have all gone to the cities, they say, 'What are we to do here? There is nothing to be had. You villagers barely have one roti to eat in two days, what scraps are you going to throw to us?' That is why the crow, sparrow and dog have all gone to live in Deoghar, they have run away from here. I may be saying this in jest but it is a very serious issue.

The other thing is health and healthcare. Someone told me that we must open a hospital here. I said, no. What is the point of spending ten to fifteen lakhs of rupees? We made a small clinic with a thatched roof instead. We did not even keep a doctor, but we have a nurse who has come from England. What are the illnesses here? No high blood pressure, no heart disease. Only cough, colds, fever, allergies – these are the common ailments the people have. Their ailments are like a few paise while you fancy city folks have one hundred percent diseases. Here they have to walk far into the jungles to relieve themselves, go long distance to a river or a pond to have a bath, walk for miles to go to the market. Everything they do here involves hard work and effort. We have it so easy, just turn over and there is the attached bathroom right next to the bed! Walk a few steps and hop into a rickshaw. Our physical effort has gone down so much that our bodies are full of toxic substances which give rise to diseases.

If even a little attention is paid to our villages, our country can become heaven on earth but unfortunately this is not happening. The people here are very good. I have lived in almost every country in the world, but I like it the most over here. I love to meet with the village folk. I keep telling them all day and night, educate your daughters, educate yourselves. Slowly there is a change taking place here. All the middle and senior level schools are getting more and more enrolment. Even girls have started studying now.

Satsang 10

13 November 1997

The main basis of western progress is the development of arms – ammunition and technology. They keep on expanding their technology, go on selling their goods and the people here keep on buying it. You see this mosquito net? It is made abroad. They just put in the yarn and the machine makes it all automatically. In earlier times, people made their own mosquito nets by hand. It used to take one man one month to make one mosquito net. The question is not about making something fast or slow; it is a question of providing employment to people. Today a machine does the work which would be done by one hundred men in the old days. This means that installing a machine renders ninety-nine people jobless.

This is one reason for the increase of unemployment in our country. Earlier a man made yarn by hand, spun the yarn, before that the cotton was cleaned, washed, dried, then rolled into thread, wound up into bundles, then it was put into the spinning wheel, only then the cloth was woven – thousands of people were engaged in this activity. They were called *koris*, belonging to the *kori* (weaver) caste. This was a cottage industry all over India. When the British came to India, they also started their clothing industry in towns like Manchester. They used to take the cloth from here and send back readymade clothes. During that time there was a great drought in India. Lakhs of people died in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This became such a great disaster because the British had started exporting the fabric from here and sending back ready-made clothes. Only those people with purchasing

power could afford those clothes. There was no work for the weavers. This was the reason that the whole country was facing a famine.

Spinning and weaving was something that every family used to do and this is what caught Gandhi's attention. He started spinning wheels in every house. This was a major reason for his success. Not only in India, but also if you go to Tibet or Kashmir, you will see shepherds who tend their sheep and spin wool. Day and night, man, woman and child, all of them spin wool. I have seen those days. They spin the wheel, knit sweaters and other woollen clothes. In North India they make woollen items, in Western India it is cotton clothes and in the South they make silk clothes. This gave a livelihood to people all over India, everyone had food to eat.

When the machines to make clothes came in, there was unemployment in India. The machines snatched away the work from the people. Gandhi was against this. Gandhi never wanted what is happening in India today. He used to say that machines and technology is useful but people are more important. What is the use of these machines when thousands are dying of hunger? They should also get something at least. He was not in favour of big industry. He believed in cottage and home-based industries. Communism was also fighting for workers and labourers but they lost. First in Russia, now in China as well. In India, communism has no strength left.

There are large numbers of poor people in the West, like in India, but there they give out a weekly dole to the unemployed. The people in the West say one thing and do something else. They create wars, sell weapons and make money. They sold many modern weapons to Iraq; now they want those weapons to be used so that Iraq will need to buy some more. It is very difficult to understand their politics. They sell arms and weapons to all the countries and when you don't buy from them, they get upset. They don't like India because we do not buy from them. Sri Lanka buys, Pakistan buys but India does not. America gave Pakistan fighter planes like F-16 many years ago as an advance. Then the American

Senate placed some restrictions due to which they could not sell these planes. Now the money had to be returned to America but they would not do this. The fact is that all these companies which sell arms to you and me, they take loans from banks and make these weapons. If they are not able to sell these weapons, how can they repay the loans taken from the bank? Then the banks will sink and the government will have to intervene.

Now there is a trade embargo declared on Iraq. No goods can enter or leave Iraq. We cannot export anything to Iraq either. If you want to send things to the Iraqi markets like lentils, grain, clothes, medicine which the ordinary person needs, you cannot do this because there is an embargo. The condition in Iraq is very bad. Thousands are dying of starvation. There is no water, no goods of any kind, nothing is available. Where will it come from? They do not allow the transport of anything to Iraq. There is no permission for export or import. No ship can go there; it will not be allowed to pass. This embargo was declared in 1993 by the United Nations. Recently another one has been placed. Earlier at least food items were allowed, from tomorrow even that will be stopped.

Swamiji, on one hand they speak of human rights and on the other side there is this embargo. Is this right?

Look here, when they speak about human rights, it is for weak people. 'Human rights' is a weapon that big powerful people wield in order to trouble weaker people. You fight with your wife every day but you preach to your servant that he should not beat his wife! He cannot ask you why you fight with your wife. All this talk of human rights is just a big fuss made by big people; they are excuses to harass weaker people.

Aren't human rights violated in the West? After all, what is the meaning of human rights? How will you describe human rights? What rights does a human have? To speak anything, to go anywhere? There should be a clear description of human rights; there have to be limits which should be clear. What

is that boundary? Society is the boundary of each country. Society decides on the boundaries. Here it is a rule that a son will not talk back to his father. He touches the feet of his parents, he does not shake hands with his father. This is the description of our society so far. Now when you talk about the rights of a son, they have to be based on this description.

In Europe and America, forget about boys, there are no restrictions on girls either. Whether it is day or night, their girls are not restricted by anything like they are in our society. That is their society whereas in our society people still say that girls should not step out of the house after dusk. This has been decided by our society looking at prevalent conditions. Now, what if the girl asks about her rights? Yes, she has rights but they are based upon social norms. Society decides upon your rights. If a man and woman do not get along, they separate, no problem. Here it will be a very difficult situation, the woman will not be able to fend for herself. Suppose a man divorces a woman and goes away, I am not talking about Bombay or Delhi, I am talking about ordinary India, where will she go? She is not educated, she will either die of starvation or end up in a brothel. You say that a man has the right to divorce, that this is a human right, but is society ready for this now?

Human society is divided into two groups, the Western society and Asian society. Asian society functions in one way and Western society functions in another way. One cannot speak of human rights based upon that. There are human rights violations in the West too. There are so many atrocities committed against the black people in America. Go to England, visit the places where the black people live, go to those ghettos and visit the places where the white people live, you will clearly see the differences for yourself.

Nowadays no one likes America. America gives money to many countries, they give millions of dollars' worth of weapons to Israel, but it is those very countries who abuse America. They have helped Pakistan so much, but now Pakistan attacks them. This has happened in history also.

When Egypt was a very strong civilization, their armies were spread out all over the world. What did they do? They captured African and Jewish people and enslaved them, made them to do all the work and they lived in luxury themselves. Eventually, they were destroyed, that civilization was finished. Rome was such a great empire, but it was also vanquished. The Greek civilization reached Takshshila, crossed over the Jhelum river into the Indian subcontinent and came upto Pataliputra. There was a battle with Chandragupta Maurya. They reached so far but still they were all defeated.

Dharma is the medium through which man can regulate the personal life with self-discipline. When you are regulated or disciplined from the outside or when your discipline is determined by social norms, that is called *kaanoon*, law, and when you apply self-restraint that is called dharma. 'Do's and don'ts' are the language of dharma, there is virtue and vice in dharma. There are no virtues and vices in law; there it is referred to as crime. You did something wrong to someone; this is a crime according to law whereas dharma calls it sin. According to the perspective of nature, that which is wrong is a sin and according to man's perspective, that which is wrong is called a crime. These things are all written in our books, I am not saying anything new.

Each country has its own particular society or social norms. In China, people fret when a girl is born. They face a similar situation here; it is very expensive for arranging a girl's marriage. I am talking about earlier times. Now there are such strict laws in China that, if you have more than one child, you can be jailed for it. The government is very strong and powerful. They say, 'Do not produce more children' and those who do are sent off to prison. After all, the population of China is more than a billion, isn't it? But this is not the case among white people. There they treat boys and girls in the same manner. They are treated equally, both receive the same food, clothes and all things are equal. Even the rights to property are the same for boys and girls.

What is the reason that people have only one to two children in Western countries, but in the East, they have many children?

Most of the white folks are educated. You will not find any uneducated people there. They get very good education. From a very young age, boys and girls are taught together. Different schools for boys and different schools for girls, it is not like that. Boys and girls study together, they play together. Even when they grow older, they spend time together, stay together. The discrimination that we have between boys and girls here is not seen there.

People from a society which is educated, which has a lot of experience, are able to regulate their population; they can decide whether they should have one child or two. Now, the villagers here are not able to make such decisions, they do not know the laws of contraception. After the menstrual cycle comes a period when conception can take place, during other times it will not be possible. Now who will tell them about this? Educated people know about the times when it is safe and not safe. One thing is that the villagers are not aware of this, the other is that they are shy to even talk about it. So it becomes difficult to talk about these things. The third point is what doctors tell people about contraception is only known by educated people and that is why they have fewer children. Here neither the father knows, nor the mother, neither the grandfather nor the grandmother.

This does not mean that there should be no relations between men and women but its effect should not be a wrong one. Now if you have eight or ten children, you cannot feed them and yet you go on producing more and more children. When you are not able to feed the children, why do you keep producing them? They say, 'It is god's gift'. This is wrong. Children are not god's gift but are the result of conditions and situations.

Satsang 11

14 November 1997

There is a lot of deceit and corruption in society nowadays. How can this problem be resolved?

Deceitfulness is not man's essential nature. It is society which makes man a liar, deceitful, a thief, full of corruption and bad behaviour. All these things are given by society. By which kind of society? A society in which there are no systems and no regulations. What happens in our society? A man's wife dies, there is no change in the man's way of life, he continues to wear the same clothes. But if a woman's husband dies, her clothes have to be changed, her jewellery is taken away. What kind of a system is this? System means an activity which is in keeping with positive ideas and law.

Banks have a system of maintaining accounting books for the money. There is a manager whose rights and responsibilities are clearly defined. Whenever there are any transactions, his signature is required. All your thousands and lakhs of rupees are not with you; they are with him, but you are not afraid that he will run away with it. Now, is the man with whom all your money is kept an honourable person? This is not necessarily true; he could well be a corrupt man, yet there is a system which acts like a check on his corruption. Such systems must function in every area. There is no such system in families which is why servants steal. There is no such system in society which is why the administrator becomes corrupt.

In the same way, a king's hands are not completely clean and pure, somewhere or the other they are blood-stained.

In olden days, kings and emperors maintained armies waged wars. Nowadays battles are fought during elections by switching allegiance to other political parties. These battles also require money and armies. Each leader needs an army in order to win in his constituency. Earlier there were horses, cavalry, guns, swords, maces and spears, the weapons of today are different. Where will he get the money for these weapons? And there should be no restriction on those funds otherwise he will not be able to contest. If you or I were to fight an election and you spend twenty lakhs while I spend a crore, it is sure that I will win. A fight is fought with the intention to win, who fights to lose?

When there was a war between the Kauravas and Pandavas or Ravana and Rama, how did they gather such large armies? After all, they must have incurred a lot of expense. Where did Rama get those funds from? All this is not written in the *Ramayana*, but think about it – all those thousands of soldiers in the armies would have had to eat, they would have needed medicines, weapons. It is not as if they waged a war against Ravana without any weapons. After all, he was a very powerful king. In those days there were kings, nowadays they are called MLAs or MPs. He definitely requires the means in order to contest elections. That is why it is pointless to say that this or that leader is corrupt. As to administrators and officials, they don't earn much by way of salaries.

What I meant to say is that hardly any funds are allocated for rural areas and villages and by the time they reach the villagers, there is almost nothing left. Is this not wrong?

The first thing is that the villagers in India are completely unaware of their rights, what can they do? None of them are educated. The vehicle of the household has one tyre which is the man and the other tyre is the woman. In our society the second tyre is totally punctured. Now, how will the vehicle run? One can fight for one's rights if one is aware of them, if there is some knowledge that these rights exist. We need to know about the rights, then we can fight for them. There

are many elements in this scenario and one-sided comments cannot be made that it is only the government which is to blame. The populace is also to blame.

Where did Rama find the funds for the war?

From Sugriva. He was not a monkey but belonged to a race called Vanar. Like the Mongol, Arab, Aryan, Hun, Khus or Kirat races, there were people of the Vanar, Riksha and other such races in South India. They all held Rishi Agastya in very high esteem and that is why Bhagwan Sri Rama went to pay his respects first of all to Agastya. Agastya Muni is considered to be the father of the Tamil language. He formulated Tamil grammar. He had a very powerful influence on South India. Like the Pope has power over the Catholics, Agastya had a similar position in South India. That is why Rama met him before anyone else.

Ravana is a very powerful king and he has abducted Sita, the first indication about this was given by Jatayu, then the second pointer came from Kabandha, the third clue came from Shabari and the fourth one was from Sugriva. That was when Rama realized that without some substantial royal support, nothing would be possible. Bali was a very powerful king in that area. Rama helped to dethrone him and placed Sugriva on the throne. After all, one must have one's own man in the seat of power, isn't it? Sugriva became a very powerful king in South India. The whole of South India came under his sway. The Vanars, Rikshas and other races came under his dominion.

There was another reason behind making Sugriva the king. As there is a friendship pact between India and Russia, there was a similar pact between Bali and Ravana. Bali would not have helped Rama in a war against Ravana and that was why he had to be removed.

Sri Rama had no hopes of receiving any help from Ayodhya, because there was an ancient non-aggression agreement between Ayodhya and Lanka dating back to the time of Dasharatha's ancestors. You may not know about this

history, but I have read all about it. Anaranya was an ancestor of Dasharatha, and during his reign Ravana had attacked Ayodhya in that war Anaranya died. After that there was a pact of 'no-war' between the two parties. That is why there was no possibility of a war between Ayodhya and Lanka. Even if Sri Rama had asked for help, there could be no war. In ancient times when royal princes were exiled, they could not avail of any facilities from the kingdom. Those were the rules of that time; never mind that today the rules are quite different. If a prince or player did not show his allegiance to the king, he was exiled from the kingdom. Then he had no right over anything from the kingdom. So according to the rules, Sri Rama had no right over Ayodhya or any assistance from there. That was why he defeated Bali and installed Sugriva as the ruler of South India.

It is also possible that because Ayodhya was so far away, the army could not be dispatched to Lanka.

It is not a question of travelling a great distance. The most important thing was that in those days there were agreements and pacts between kings which had to be adhered to regardless of the situation. India was divided into many different kingdoms like we have different states today. Each state has a chief minister, but the centre is in New Delhi, the Prime Minister is supreme there. In those days he was called 'Chakravarti.' There have been different chakravartis in every age. During the times of the Pandavas, the seat of the Chakravarti or ruler was in Hastinapur, during the Ikshavaku dynasty it was in Ayodhya. Dasharatha was the Chakravarti of Ayodhya, but his own personal kingdom was Awadh. All the other kings in India accepted Dasharatha as their head like Bihar, Bengal, Tamil Nadu and other states look upon Delhi as their head. Yes, there are some people in Kashmir who are not ready to accept Delhi, that is why there is fighting, you know about it.

Anyway, it is because of this agreement that Sri Rama had no prospects of receiving any help from Ayodhya, but all the

kingdoms south of the Vindhya were free from the rule of Ayodhya. They belonged to a separate group, to that of Bali. Sri Rama established Sugriva there and that is how he got his royal support.

When King Mandhata of Ayodhya waged war with Lavanasur, he was killed. After that Ayodhya should have become part of Lavanasur's kingdom, but that did not happen. Why was that so?

There is a rule in relation to winning over another kingdom which is prevalent even today. You take airplanes from here and bomb the whole of Pakistan, kill all the ministers but despite that you cannot say that you have won over Pakistan. You may have vanquished Pakistan, but you have not won it. Winning over it means that your infantry has to enter into that country and face the people there. This is the rule which applies for winning over another country. The infantry has to enter into the country and hoist their flag in that place. Only then will it be accepted that the country has been won over. The navy as well as the air-force have their chiefs, but the chief of the army is called the Commander-In-Chief because he is the real deciding force. Until he enters the country, it cannot be said that it has been won over. Neither the navy nor the air-force effect decisive victories over any country, this is the case even today.

When Sri Rama won over Lanka, did he not hoist the flag of Ayodhya there?

No, Sri Rama had not attacked Ravana to win over Lanka nor to give the kingdom to Vibhishana. It was only to liberate Sita that the attack was made on Lanka. After his victory over Lanka and rescuing Sita, what interest did Sri Rama have in Lanka? Why would he hoist the flag there? He told Lakshman, Sugriva, Hanuman, Angad and others to go and perform the coronation ceremony for Vibhishana and it was then that Sugriva and his army entered Lanka.

So many Rakshas, Vanars and Rikshas died there, how were their last rites performed? Was there a place for their last rites?

Wars are not fought like what you see in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* television serials. You do not belong to the kshatriya caste; your parents have not told you anything about war. I was born into that caste where there are fights all the time. My ancestors always perished in wars. Wars do not take place in the way you think they do. Wars happen between groups, you fight with them, they take you on, they confront one group, we fight with one another. In the *Mahabharata* serial, everyone is fighting with everyone. This is not how wars are waged, they happen in another manner. One day they decide that today we will form a maze, Abhimanyu will enter it and the rest of the army will be positioned in different places. One day they decide that Bhishma and Arjuna will fight, everyone else will stay out of it. Today Rama and Ravana will fight, we will all stay quiet.

Who takes these decisions?

The army has a commander, they are his decisions. There are two types of war, one is direct or straightforward and another is secret. The secret wars are called guerrilla warfare today. There were no guerrilla wars in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, they were open. Decisions were taken face-to-face on the battlefield as to who would be the head of the army that day, which weapon would be used, where the fight would take place, who would fight with whom. This used to be properly declared in advance, like it is in a cricket or hockey match. In those days there were rules for warfare and some of those are still applied today.

But still, Swamiji, thousands of people must be dying, it must be so difficult to pick up the bodies?

Yes, they used to be picked up and those who used to do that were called *yogini*, *vetaal*, *pishach* etc. Today the image in your mind of 'vetaal' or 'pishach' is something else. Those

people were what we call the 'Red Cross' today. They had a particular position, a specific duty. They used to tend to the wounded and pick up the corpses and they were never attacked. Even today when the vehicles of the Red Cross go into the battlefield, no one can shower bullets on them, this is the rule. It is an international rule that those who tend to the wounded cannot be attacked. The hospital in which the wounded are treated cannot be attacked. This rule applies even today. There have been instances when this rule has been broken, but according to international law, this is forbidden.

Now there is another rule, journalists and news reporters cannot be attacked. They are given protection. Today the wars in Afghanistan and Bosnia are being covered mostly by women reporters. A journalist can meet any commander, one from this side and one from the other side too, they have full protection and security. No one can touch them. They have their press identity card. They can ask questions to this side and the other side too. Then they file their reports, they have total freedom to give the news.

These are the rules of war which are followed everywhere. These were also followed in the ancient times. Someone who is not participating in the battle cannot be attacked even if they are your sworn enemies. The attack on Karna was not legitimate and that was why he objected, "I am unarmed, why am I being attacked? This is against dharma." Sri Krishna was very sharp. He was adept at giving answers. He said, "When you were disrobing Draupadi, you did not remember dharma. Now that your life is at risk, you are calling upon dharma and law. If you want to call upon law, you should apply it everywhere." Then he said to Arjuna, "Attack and kill him. If he dies, it will be today or else he is never going to die. Let anyone say what they like, we shall see."

In the Mahabharata war, Bhishma Pitamaha did not attack anyone except Arjuna. He had said that every day ten thousand soldiers will be killed and amongst the chief warriors, apart from Arjuna, he would not attack any of the other Pandavas. The point here is that war is not like

something to do with the jungle; there are very specific rules and regulations. Even today most of the rules are the same as they were five thousand years ago. There may be a little difference, that's all. There have also been injustices, people have made mistakes. The atomic bomb which was dropped on Japan will always be criticized by history because it was against the rules of warfare.

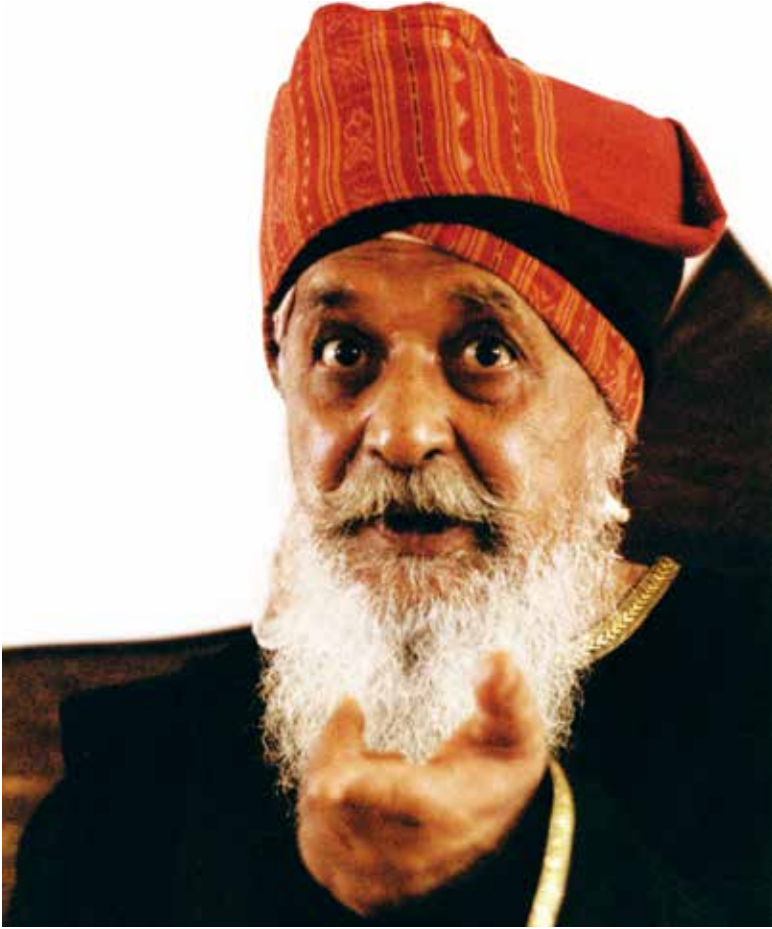
On the art of poetry

The *Ramacharitamanas* is pure poetry through and through. In ancient times poetry had more importance than prose. Ever since books began to be printed and published, prose has begun to be used much more. In comparison to prose, poetry has a much stronger and quicker influence on the mind. You can learn the *Ramacharitamanas* by heart. If it is converted into prose you will find it difficult to memorize because prose does not have any rhythm or rhyme to it, it is only words. Poetry has a rhyme and rhyme moves to a rhythm. The electromagnetic energy in the brain also moves in waves, they have a rhythm and poetry also moves in the same manner. This is not found in prose and that is why people find it difficult to memorize prose passages. Songs are remembered so easily. Some songs are sung for generations in the villages, everyone remembers them.

The art of poetry is a very ancient one. We call Rishi Valmiki *Adikavi*, or the first poet. History states that before man learnt how to write, he learnt how to draw pictures. Before prose, he learnt how to compose poetry. It is possible that in ancient times, people conversed in rhymes or poetry. It is possible that the dialogue between Vishwamitra and Sri Rama was in the form of poetry. Who knows? Poetry uses less words, whereas in prose many useless words come in. Now I am speaking with all of you, it is very long. In poetry I can economize!

In the ancient times, we had the age of Sutras – *Brahma Sutras*, *Yoga Sutras*, vastu sutra, neeti sutra, kama sutra – like these, many sutras were popular. In these sutras, the entire

subject was addressed in short sentences. Like '*yogas chitta vritti nirodhah*', four words are joined together to express one thought. In the age of sutras, the gurus did not give long lectures but gave their students short aphorisms or sutras. Nowadays, whether it is law, literature, medicine or engineering, everything has to be explained in detail. That is why most people use prose today, but one still likes poetry more, '*kaavyashaastravinodenakaalogachhatidheemataam*' – the wise pass their time in entertaining poetry and literature.



















Satsang 12

15 November 1997

The creation or birth of man, animals and birds, plants or even little insects is an incredible and miraculous activity. There is a great science behind it. Simply saying that children are a gift from God is not correct. Only those who are ignorant give such an answer. There is a very important element which is behind the birth of man and it is called DNA. It is through the uniting of two different strains of DNA that offspring are born, whether dark or fair, short or tall, healthy or unhealthy. This DNA is a very important element which people did not know about earlier, but after the studies in genetic science people have begun to accept this.

Though the system of marriage according to our vedic dharma exists only in name nowadays, it was considered very important that for the crossbreeding between DNA, the strains should be different from each other. DNA is not only found in man and animals but also in plant life. When there is hybridization of corn, it is called hybrid corn and is of a very good quality. In the same manner, there are different kinds of rice and wheat. This is also seen in cows, farmers crossbreed the Sahiwal cow with a Jersey cow. These breeds are a product of DNA hybridization.

Now there are many experiments with DNA. Earlier diseases like cancer used to be detected only after they had reached their last stages, when they had reached beyond the point of treatment. If cancer is detected early, then it is not untreatable, it can be treated. Scientists are conducting research on DNA to find out the predisposition for cancer and then they are able to treat it very early. This genetic science is in its early stages now.

Marriage, in which a man and woman come together, is a very important activity, event and system. If there is a mistake in this, the offspring can also be affected. Marriage is not just a matter of personal choice and interest between a man and a woman. At an emotional level if one falls in love that is something very personal, but when two families come together, that is a social activity. Marriage is above all this.

Marriage is a social arrangement in which a natural activity has been added. In this natural activity, *dhanatmak* or positive and *rinatmak* or negative has been added. The woman represents the *rinatmak* or negative and the man represents the *dhanatmak* or positive. The child born to them will be either healthy or unhealthy, have good conduct or be a hooligan. Saints, good persons and bad persons, thieves or honest persons are all born as a result of this activity but where does the difference lie? The difference lies in the *bija* element. That which you call DNA, we call it *bija* or seed.

Some people are very strong and hardy. When Bhima as a child used to fall on the ground, stones would break because of his weight. Hanuman's body was as strong as a diamond. Even now there are strong people in the world. How do Eskimos live in ice? We cannot understand how they can live in houses made from ice. I have seen the people of Afghanistan, they are very strong. The people of Kazakhstan are very beautiful. When you look at them, you don't feel like taking your eyes away. In some places there are people whom you do not feel like looking at. How did this happen? All this is dependent on the *bija* or seed.

There are rules and systems that govern the selection of this seed. The first rule is that the greater the distance or difference between the woman and the man, the better it is. That is why not only the *gotra* or the bloodline but even the *varna* or caste should be different. Why do you produce hybrid corn or wheat? In order to get a good harvest. Why do you hybridize bananas? Because just one bunch yields 500 to 600 bananas. Why is there crossbreeding of cows and sheep? You get more produce, more benefits. The cow gives 15 to 20

litres of milk, you get more wool from sheep. Then why don't you do this with people? You will get better offspring from it. If a child is strong, intelligent, wise and wealthy, where is the harm in that?

After all, Vishwamitra and Menaka were from different places. Menaka was an apsara and Vishwamitra was a sadhu. What kind of offspring did they produce? When a child was born to the offspring of Vishwamitra and Menaka, that child did not play with puppies but with lion cubs. Vishwamitra and Menaka's daughter was Shakuntala and her son was Bharat. Is it an ordinary quality for a little child to play with lion cubs?

Was Arjuna upset that after the war there would be intermingling of varnas?

No, the word 'varnasankar' used in the *Bhagavad Gita* was in another context or perspective. Five thousand years ago, during the Mahabharata war when the teaching of the *Gita* was delivered, the social and political situation in India was not in good shape. India was going through a period of downfall and the proof of that was that a war within a family was taking place.

In any country where the social and political conditions are healthy, can such a war between family members take place? There is a family feud going on in Afghanistan. It is happening in Bosnia, isn't it? Where do such murderous fights take place? Where the minds of people have gone off the rails. During that time India was in a pitiable condition because wrong things were considered as good and the good was said to be bad. There is a difference between intermingling and illegitimacy. If you are married off to someone of another caste, the child born from that union will be considered *varnasankar* or of mixed-blood. However, if you have unsanctioned relations with someone and you have a child, that child will not be called *varnasankar* but 'without caste' or illegitimate. A child born from marriage is called inter-caste or *varnasankar*, this is something quite different.

The boys and girls in the West say that we will marry according to our own wish and not according to that of our parents. How can our parents' choice be our choice? If the parents are French they will say, marry a French person, the Germans will say, marry a German, the Greeks will say, marry a Greek. But we will go and marry someone from another country, nowadays all foreign boys and girls say this. Varnasankar is not a bad word. When there is marriage with another varna, then there is a crossing of DNA elements.

If the daughter of a Brahmin in India marries into a Sharma, Pathak or Vajpayi family, it is not varnasankar but marriage within the same caste. You cannot say that a child born from that marriage will be endowed with outstanding qualities. This implies that the child will be hardworking, independent and self-reliant, work hard in the right way and earn a good living, be able to imbibe knowledge properly in today's age, excel in science, literature, arts, religion, and spirituality, be introspective. Today these are the kind of children we need, isn't it? Now suppose a Brahmin girl goes to America and marries an Anglo-Saxon. Anglo-Saxon is an Indo-European race. Indo-European races are always intelligent and those people are way ahead in science and technology.

Anglo-Saxons are very drawn to knowledge, they are very interested in studying, learning, travelling and getting to know about things. They have a very open mind and do not discriminate between religions. No matter what their personal religion is, they will also study Islam and even do bhajan and kirtan. They are not particularly attached to any one religion. They are very thirsty for knowledge and that is why in the English language you will find books on every topic under the sun. The geography of any country, history, science, the art of love, religion, economics, the science of liberation, you will find all this in English books. Education or knowledge is very engaging for them. So if a girl from here married someone from that race, then you will see and find all these qualities in a child born from that union.

This is an age of *unnayan* or upliftment of girls. Earlier society used to say 'No', isn't it? Now even society is saying 'Yes', the king is also saying 'Yes.' The conditions are conducive for the girl to go beyond the boundaries of the home. Earlier she was unable to move beyond the four walls of the house. Nowadays if a girl does not wish to get married and wants to set up a business, become a lawyer or become proficient in any field of knowledge, she must be allowed to do so. Marriage is not the only option left to her. In earlier times, this was the only path open to her, she had no other recourse in life. Today marriage is the third choice open to a girl. The first option is education, the second one is a career and the third one is marriage.

In olden days, girls were not initiated into sannyasa. When I started giving sannyasa to women, there were no female sannyasins to be found anywhere. People used to say that girls are not at all meant to take the path of sannyasa. When I started giving sannyasa to them, people's ears pricked up, but today girls take sannyasa, don geru robes, shave their heads, nobody minds at all. There is a lot of difference in the times of today and those gone by, and in the times to come this will be even more so. Whether a girl is your own daughter or someone else's, if she wishes to study, she must be educated, if she wishes to have a career, she must be allowed to do so. If she goes into business, that is very good because whatever work girls do, they do it very systematically and properly. This is my own personal experience, I have had a lot of work done very well by girls.

They say that there are many instances in the *Ramayana* when there was *akashvani*, for example at the time when Lakshman got angry. At those times, was a real sound heard or was a voice heard in the mind – what was that occurrence?

Akashvani is the name of that sound which manifests within a person. This is not audible to or heard by everyone. What the thought is, you may well come to know, but *vani* means sound. Someone says something, that which is called *vani*.

This akashvani is not heard by each and everyone, but this much is certain that some have heard it, even I have heard it. I heard the name of this place with my own ears. I was in Tryambakeshwar, I was not in a state of deep dhyana or meditation but my eyes were closed. I heard a voice, I heard the words. I remember those words. Not just once, I heard this akashvani many times. There is a sound but I do not accept that this sound comes from outside. I believe that our *atma* or soul which is within us, or that god or that pure inner self, call it by any name, it is the voice of that element. I have heard that sound. I heard it twice in Tryambakeshwar, I have heard it here as well and before this also. There is akashvani but it is not heard by everyone.

But when Lakshman heard akashvani, Sri Rama and Sita also heard it.

Yes, they may have also heard it. In those times, anyone could hear it. Many minds can be joined together.

And at such times, is something seen as well?

No, it is not necessary that something is also seen. It may be seen and also not seen. Many times there is a crackling like lightning, there can be a sound of a storm, there can be many different kinds of experiences. When I first heard it in Tryambakeshwar, in the beginning it sounded as if a storm was brewing. It felt as if there was a strong storm, like it was raining heavily, after that the voice was heard. This sound was not only heard by me, many have heard it. In her poems Mirabai says:

*Barase badariya saavanki, saavanki man bhaavanki
Daadur mora papeeha bole, bhanak padi peeya aavanki.*

The monsoon clouds shower rain, it entrances the mind.

The rain bird sings its song, it heralds the arrival of my lord.

‘Peeya’ means the Lord or the divine here. ‘Bhanak’ is considered to be the sound of the Lord. Like you came in from outside. I have not seen you but I heard the sound of your footsteps. I have not seen you, I only got the inkling that someone has come. In the same way, this akashvani is like that bhanak. That is what Mirabai talks about in her poems, *Barase badariya saavanki* – this is her experience. At that time, it feels as if it is raining, like relentless heavy rain. One is not afraid of it, instead one likes it. *Daadur mora papeeha bole* (my rain bird sings) – these are all indications or signs of what you can call akashvani or antarvani, call it what you like.

In English it is called ‘Voice of the Spirit’. People have given it many different names. It is also mentioned in Islam. Mohammed was illiterate, he had not gone to school but he wrote the whole Koran. How? The voice which comes from within, you can take it to be the voice of god, for god is outside as well as inside. Akashvani is the sound of god. The Vedas were also written like that. The Vedas written by the rishis and muni sare called ‘shruti’. *Shruti* means that which is heard.

The Koran is shruti, Christians consider the Bible to be shruti, in the same manner, we believe the Vedas to be shruti. Even the *Ramacharitamanas* is like that. The *Ramacharitamanas* was written through Tulsidas. This is called apaurusheya. Work was also written through Valmiki, of course Valmiki was also a poet. He is called *Adikavi* or the first poet. Tulsidas was not a poet that is why he is not referred to as *Kavi Tulsidas*. Tulsidas was a saint but he had to become a poet. As a saint when he met Brahmarakshasa, that was when wisdom dawned within him and he started writing.

Tulsidas used to study Sanskrit in Benaras. He was a Sanskrit scholar and that was why he first started writing in Sanskrit. He used to write at night but in the morning all the papers would disappear. Then he heard the instruction to write in his native tongue, it was only then that he wrote in his own language. You can call that Hindi or Avadhi or whatever, in those days that was the language which was spoken. At that time, people did not speak pure Hindi or classical Hindi as we know it today.

Valmiki's work is the base or foundation of the *Ramayana* in this age. You must remember one thing: the basis of all stories has always been folk tales. The stories that people tell, the kirtans and bhajans sung by them, the pictures they paint, the traditions which they follow, it is these that become the basis on which literature is later written. The essence of the *Ramacharitamanas* is taken from Valmiki's *Ramayana*, but there are radical differences between them as well. Sri Rama is maryada purushottam and the ideal man for Valmiki, whereas for Tulsidas he is God personified, not an incarnation of god but God himself. It is this very idea that he tried to bring out through Kakabhushundi. Tulsidas's Rama was not just maryada purushottam, he was *Parabrahma Purusha*, the ultimate being.

Who composed this story? Valmiki was the first person to put it into words, but when was the *Ramayana* first composed and by whom?

The story of the *Ramayana* has been written innumerable times. At present, the stories of Rama are popular, regardless of their modified, altered, distorted forms, and apart from India, they are found in Burma, Bali, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Laos.

Did they go from here?

Look here, if you keep asking me things, I will have to speak even more. What you are talking about is something that relates to this century when Indonesia and Sumatra are one geographical entity. But what was their geographical state two hundred thousand years ago? Where was Sri Lanka? Where were the Himalayas? Where was Vindhya? Was the Arabian Sea there or not? Where was Africa? What was the position of the continents two or four hundred thousand years ago? When was Sri Rama born? At the end of Treta Yuga. After Treta Yuga, the whole of the Dwapara Yuga went by and at the end of Dwapara Yuga, Sri Krishna was born and after his death came the Kali Yuga. Five thousand years of

the Kali Yuga have gone by. These five thousand years, then comes Dwapara Yuga and before that three to four thousand years, if you add them all together you will get the time of Sri Rama. His birth takes place in every yuga, each time Sita is abducted, every time Ravana is born, this is the film which is made, this is what is written.

Even the Mahabharata?

We are only talking about the *Ramayana* now. When the *Ramayana* took place, what was the geographical position of India? Where was Sri Lanka? Don't say that Sri Lanka was where it is now because there is a continual change in the position of the continents. There used to be an ocean where the Himalayas stand today. This is a definite fact because fossils have been found there which prove this. If you have been to Gangotri and Yamunotri, you will have seen round pebbles in many places. These pebbles are only formed when they roll around in water for thousands of years. There is nothing of the kind to be found in those places, but you still see such pebbles in the mountains. Even the Vindhya-chal was once an ocean, it has risen up only now.

Dr Sampurnananda and Lokmanya Tilak, two highly learned men, have written books. One of their books is called *The Orient* and another person's book is called *The Arctic Home of the Vedas*. In these books the authors have explained all these things with conclusive evidence and proof. Imagine that when Sri Rama was born, at that time if Rameshwaram was where it is today, and Sri Lanka, Chitrakoot were also where they are today, then it points to these events having taken place ten or twenty thousand years ago. But if Sri Rama was born at the end of the Treta Yuga, then according to calculations of the scriptures which give an estimate of the yugas, so many years for Satya Yuga, so many for Treta Yuga, you will find that neither Rameshwaram, Chitrakoot nor Sri Lanka could be where they are today. Indonesia is one of the largest Muslim countries today, but Hanuman is revered by the people, they worship him. Little boys say that they will

become Hanuman. They have dances, drama, songs and music about the *Ramayana*. Their names, the names of the different places are taken from the *Ramayana*. In Thailand, Ramakatha or the story of Rama is called Ramakeerti. In this way, it is the same in Burma.

The point I am making is that there is evidence of Rama's stories in South-East Asia. Now, where is Kishkindha? When you attempt to find out about this, why don't you take it that Ramachandra went towards the South-East during his exile. After all, the island of Bali is there. What you are calling Kishkindha today, call it the island of Bali. Today this island is near Indonesia. Even today there are Hindus who speak Hindi.

I have read another book, *Gondwanaland*. This is a very good book written by an Australian. It has many pictures and photographs as well. His research is based upon a study of rocks, animals and birds, trees and plant life. He says that in those times, the southern part of India beyond the Vindhya mountains were part of what was called the Gondwanaland continent which included the areas of what are now the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, South-East Asia, Australia and Africa. This is a very well-researched book which he has written in great detail. What I mean to say is that we should not look at the ancient stories of our country in relation to present geographical positions.

In 1950 I went on a tour of India with my Guruji, Swami Sivananda. During that tour we also went through Kutch. In those days, you had to take a boat to get to Kutch, there used to be so much water. When I moved to Munger later, I made another trip there and this time I went by car, the water had disappeared. Such a great change in just twenty to twenty-five years!

Continental Shift or the movement of continents is a reality of nature. This is something that I believe, without a doubt. The second thing is global warming. This principle is also based on reality. If the planet keeps on getting warmer, in the next two hundred years many islands which are about

two or three feet above sea level will all be under water. If the temperature increases at an average rate of even two degrees, then many villages that are along the seashore will drown. If the temperature falls, then many islands will also emerge from the ocean. Thinking about all these things can become a bit difficult at times. Therefore, when I read the *Ramacharitamanas*, I do not read it from a historical perspective. I only read it in the light of bhakti and emotions. I do not pay attention to where Lanka is. All I see is that the easiest way to attain god is to leave everything to His will and grace. Say to him, 'Lord, I am doing japa. My mind wanders that is why I am doing it. I also perform all the other karmas like bhajan and poojas, but I know that I am not going to attain you through all this. You will only be found when you wish it to be so.' This is the only thing that you will find in the *Ramacharitamanas*: *Bina hari kripa milahi nahi santa* – Without the grace of god, you cannot find or meet saints and holy men.

I have adopted this perspective towards the *Rama-charitamanas* because it is not possible for man to plumb the depths of history. Annie Besant, Colonel Alcott and Mr Charles Leadbeater have been leading figures of the Theosophical Society. These people developed a series of maps of the earth which show how the earth was fifty thousand years ago, how the planet looked more than a hundred and fifty thousand years ago. After all, ever since the earth broke off from the Sun and became an independent planet, ever since water has been forming on it, its islands and continents have undergone constant change.

Dr Sampooranananda and Lokmanya Tilak are of the opinion that the Vedas were written in the North Arctic region, which is called the North Pole. Sampooranananda and Lokmanya Tilak were also renowned astrologers. They say that today the Pole star is in the north but gradually, as it keeps turning, its direction will change. They have referred to a story on the basis of which they have tried to show when the ice began forming at the North Pole. This story has been

taken from the Puranas. There is a story in the Puranas that once upon a time there was a very great kingdom. Once, the prince was playing with the son of the minister and other royal children. A rishi passed by and started talking to those children. They replied to him in a very rude and insulting manner. He got enraged and pronounced a curse that everything would turn to ice. Ice began to fall day and night and this constant shower of ice turned the place into the North Pole. This may be just a story but it also indicates the beginning or foundation of the Ice Age. This ice began forming at a time when its position shifted a little and this is what they have tried to show through this story.

Later Dr Sampoorananda tried to explain how people from the Indian subcontinent migrated to other places. The Himalayas had started rising from the Karakoram range, the oceans began receding, Neelanchal started rising in Kashmir. Earlier the area of Kashmir was an ocean. This is not something that took place two or four thousand years ago. The oceans receded and all the people fled at that time. At that time, the people who lived there belonged to the Semitic race, called the children of Abraham and Solomon. These people migrated from that area and settled down in Israel.

The other group of people who fled their land are called Parsees. In the religious scriptures of the Parsees called the Zend Avesta, it is mentioned where they found insects and mosquitoes, bugs, scorpions and snakes; where it was very hot, where the water was scarce, where it was rocky, all this is described in that book. In this book can be found when the people were leaving their land, the places they went to, their entire history. We learn that the Parsees used to live in this part of the world in earlier times.

Even before this event, there was a mass exodus from that part of the world. Many hundreds of thousands of years ago during that period when the Vindhya and Himalaya mountains arose, there were many earthquakes. At that time dinosaurs became extinct in this area. This goes back to a time which is more than two to three hundred thousand years ago.

There used to be huge animals like dinosaurs. They became extinct during this period. Sampooranananda refers to them as '*daanavas*' and '*asuras*' or demons. Nevertheless, these are all stories, either assumptions or calculations made by people, we do not know for certain. Delving that deep into history is beyond our capacity, it is very difficult to say anything absolutely concrete and conclusive about this.

We consider the Himalayas as sacred; do the Chinese also see them as sacred? After all, the medicinal herbs, forests, rivers and other invaluable gifts of the Himalayas would have been received by them as well?

No, it's not quite like that. I have been to Tibet and travelled to many places there. The part of the Himalayas in that area is completely barren. The monsoon does not reach there at all. Why do we consider the Himalayas to be so sacred? The meaning of purity is associated with the way it was used. It is sacred because rishis and munis lived there. Why did they live there? That is something which you know.

The most important thing is that the Himalayas have nourished India. All the rivers emanated and originated from there, whether it was the Indus, Ganga or Yamuna. The Himalayas is a treasure trove of gems, it is a storehouse of plant life, there is no doubt about this. If it were not for the Indus, Ganga and Yamuna, India would have been as barren a desert as Arabia.

The idea of purity in India is both religious and practical, it is seen from both perspectives. So why did the rishis and munis go and live there? It was cold and that climate was conducive to do japa and dhyana; they could live in isolation. That is why it is sacred. People built large temples in safe and secure places, so that worship could be performed without any threat of them being destroyed.

What does China get from the Himalayas? Nothing. The monsoon heads northwards, collides with the mountains and turns back. On that side all that is seen is dry forests, rocky and barren mountains. However, China has given many things

to the world. Gunpowder is a discovery of China. Even paper was first made there. China has had relations with India since Buddhist times. The priests from India used to live in China. The Buddhist religion as well as the Sanskrit language went there. Japan got Buddhism from China, not from India. It first spread to China, from China to Korea, and from Korea it reached Japan. Earlier China and Japan were enemies. When their political relations improved, the Japanese went to China and studied Sanskrit, Pali and Buddhism. Many travellers from China like Fa-Hien and Huiyen Tsang came to India, none came from Japan.

Is Sanskrit still found in China today?

No it is not, that is what one must say because language is a very important base of politics. Language plays a very important role in politics. When the Sanskrit language went from India to China, it implied that politics also went. Language is the soldier of politics. After the time of King Harshavardhana, the relations between India and China were strained. His sister, Rajashree, was abducted and Harshavardhan waged a war with the Huns. These Huns had entered India from China through the Karakoram Pass. Anyway, they were stopped and Rajashree was rescued, but Harshavardhan refused to meet the ambassador and diplomatic emissaries of China in his capital Kanauj. When they were made to wait outside the royal court and were not granted an audience, they took great offence to this and left in anger.

After that, diplomatic relations between India and China were disrupted for centuries. And the main credit or blame – call it what you like – for the independent status enjoyed by Tibet for many years, goes to India. For hundreds of years, Lama Tibet was an independent country until China attacked it recently and annexed it as part of China. India is to blame for this as well. The credit for Tibet's independence goes to India. For centuries Tibet was totally isolated and separate. At that time, an understanding was arrived at by which China would have a say in the appointment of the

Dalai Lama. Whoever the Dalai Lamas have been, they have not been Tibetan but Chinese, regardless of which part of China they hailed from. This is politics and is something to be understood. People do not open their mouths and speak openly about this. This is a political alliance. It is the same case in relation to Kashmir. The majority of the population in Kashmir is Muslim but the king is a pure Hindu, a follower of the vedic dharma. This is a political arrangement which is made in secret, but one cannot make out anything from the outside. This does not have much to do with the people. Tibet has been the country of the Tibetans but their guru or their administrator has been Chinese. Whatever the arrangement might be for electing the Dalai Lama is all very well but the truth is that he is Chinese.

In that case, is it not true about the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama?

We are not talking about reincarnation here. I am not saying that the issue of reincarnation is not true. All these things about the Lama taking birth in such-and-such place, that he recognized a mala or remembered some objects is all right in a particular context, but it is also a political fact that whoever has become the Dalai Lama has been Chinese.

In politics when there is an alliance between two different parties, one is what is visible to the outside and another aspect is secret. This secret alliance is not known to anyone except a few insiders. Even today, the internal or hidden politics between India and Pakistan is one thing and what is visible on the outside is another matter all together. I have taken birth in such a family which has politics in its blood. I can recognize all these things very quickly.

A handkerchief will flutter, go in four directions, five officials will follow, take a decision, bring back a baby, there will be an announcement about the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama – all this will happen but the person has to be Chinese. All the Lamas have been Chinese because many years ago there was an understanding or a pact between India and

China that Tibet should be a separate, independent country because the people are followers of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. To be able to lead their lives according to the precepts of Mahayana Buddhism was only possible if they had an independent country, because China has a different philosophy. Their government, rules, regulations are totally different. India wished to see Tibet as a Mahayana country. The rulers of China agreed with the government of India but they said that the guru or chief person in Tibet would be Chinese. India said, 'Okay.' So this is the story. The same story goes for Kashmir.

Now in the modern age because of the Panchsheela policy, India does not interfere, and therefore Tibet has become a part of China. This is not a very good thing for us and could become the cause for another threat to India. The source of the Ganga and Indus is there. There is a lake next to it, Rakshasa Taal. That is where the Indus originates. If this fact becomes known, India will face a great loss. It will have to pay a heavy price for its political mistake.

According to international law, if a river originates in your country then you have rights over it. You are the one who has the deciding power. About forty years ago, I read a book written by Swami Pranavananda. It was published by the Calcutta University. He used to visit Kailash-Mansarovar every year. He used to take a rubber raft along with him and collect samples of water from different areas of the Mansarovar lake as well as samples of stones and pebbles. When he returned to Calcutta, he examined them. There is a similarity between the water of Mansarovar and the Ganga, he wrote a book on his findings called *Kailash-Mansarovar*.

When China attacked Tibet, they closed the road leading to Kailash. I am from those parts, an inhabitant of the mountains of Almora. At that time, one route to reach Kailash was through Almora, another route went through Pithoragarh. Both routes merge after a certain point. When I had gone, I had taken the route via Pithoragarh. I had gone after I had taken sannyasa, not before that. In those days, many

people used to make the trip to Kailash-Mansarovar. The first problems began when the Dalai Lama fled Tibet and was given sanctuary by the Indian government. The second problem came when there was a war between China and India over the border issue. After that, the visits to Kailash-Mansarovar were stopped.

Nowadays people can go once a year. Anyway, the Indian government does not protest too much about it. If one looks at the reality of the situation, then the biggest shrine or most important pilgrimage site for the Sikhs is the Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, and the most important pilgrimage site for the Hindus is Kailash. People have very strong and deep emotions in relation to religious places, but the Indian government is secular, it does not say much.

Why is it considered inauspicious to go via the Narmada river on one's way to collect water from Gangotri? There are also similar restrictions about visiting Magadha.

In our country we have some ancient and some regional traditions. They have nothing to do with the scriptures. Yes, one finds several derogatory or negative references about the Karmanasha river in our scriptures and in many places you will find similar references to Magadha, but they are related to a specific time period. It is possible that the reason behind it is the thought processes in Magadha. After all, Magadha has been the home of Buddhism and Jainism as well.

Today there are no fights between Buddhists, Jains and Hindus but during earlier times there was a lot of friction. So much so that even during the reign of Chandragupta there were conflicts. What was the reason behind Chanakya leaving Pataliputra and going to study in Takshashila when there were many learned scholars and excellent Sanskrit education available in Pataliputra? It was because the ruler in Pataliputra, Mahapadmanand, gave shelter to many Buddhists. Chandragupta Maurya adopted Jainism after his reign and went to live in Karnataka in Southern India. Chandragupta was very drawn towards the Jain religion, his

son Ashoka was attracted towards Buddhism much later. In those times, there were a lot of conflicts between the followers of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. It is possible that this was the reason why pilgrims boycotted or abandoned Magadha.

The reason behind the connection with Magadha and the idea that the Karmanasha river should be crossed is to do with geographical location. There is no scriptural or puranic reason behind it. There was a tradition that when people brought water from Gangotri, they used to travel through Uttarakhand and Mithila, then pass by the area close to Baidyanath Dham and go via Odisha. This was the main reason. About hundred years ago, Madhya Pradesh was a very deserted state, there was not much habitation there. During a pilgrimage when one has to go to one pilgrim place after another, it is always better that people travel along routes which are inhabited and not deserted.

After descending from Gangotri, you go through Brijbhoomi, Avadh, Mithila, carry on through Bhojpur, go past Baidyanath Dham into Odisha, enter Andhra Pradesh from there and eventually reach Rameshwaram. There are two things here: One is that this route is well populated, and the other question is how many rivers will the pilgrims cross? In those days, where were the facilities to cross rivers easily? When this practice began that it is auspicious to offer water from Gangotri at Rameshwaram, people also thought about which routes to avoid. One should not think that Magadha is a bad place or that the River Karmanash is not good or that the Narmada river is not sacred. The areas that the Narmada river flows through, even today are heavily forested which man cannot cross on foot. Trees grow very close together, Madhya Pradesh is a highly forested area. There are many thick jungles, that is why people are afraid to go through those parts. It is from the perspective of convenience and safety that people were encouraged to take one route and avoid the other, that is what we shall have to accept.

Why is there so much importance given to performing parikrama of the Narmada?

Several cultures came together to form one culture in India which is called vedic culture. The first civilization is of the Indus valley, the second one is of the Gangetic civilization, the Brahmaputra valley civilization is third, the fourth one is the Narmada valley civilization and the fifth one is the civilization of the Kaveri area. It is these five cultures which together formed the vedic culture as they accepted the Vedas. The Vedas form the basis of all the worship, rituals, marriage ceremonies as also last rites conducted in all these places, not the Bible or the Koran.

The Indus civilization was the most progressive of them all. Political systems, proficiency in sculpture, trade, money, gold and silver, travel to and from foreign lands – these are the indicators of a progressive culture, like what you see today among foreigners.

The Gangetic valley culture was a culture of knowledge, it was the culture of the Vedas, Upanishads, mantras, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and spirituality. The Indus valley civilization was a culture of citizens where the emphasis was on earning wealth, fighting, changing one king after another whereas the Gangetic civilization had nothing to do with all those things, it was totally spiritual.

The tantras and worship of Devis like Kamakhya were seen in the Brahmaputra valley. Its influence went as far as Bengal and Odisha. The Narmada valley civilization was related to yoga, tantra, mantra and black magic, while the Kaveri culture was connected with music, literature, dance and sculpture. Just shaking your legs and twisting your waist is not dance. Dance is a language through which you can express emotions. Dance is the language of mudras and there are books written about them. There is a book in Sanskrit on Bharatnatyam in which everything about the different movements, speed, mudras, rhythm, timing are described in great detail.

The same is seen with the art of sculpture. There are many great temples in South India which are like cities in

themselves. Do you know about the temple in Kumbhakonam? Here 'Kumbha' is related to the sign of Aquarius and the meaning of the word 'kona' is corner or point. *Jab kumbhaka surya singhastha hota hai* – When the sun is in the sign of Aquarius, the shadow of the temple falls outside the boundaries of the temple grounds, not otherwise. It is a very vast temple. The proportion of its height, breadth and length is such that though the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, its shadow does not fall beyond its boundaries except when the sun is in the sign of Aquarius. This happens only once in twelve years and on that day there is a very big festival called Mahamakham. *Makha* means yajna. During that time lakhs of pandits, learned scholars, priests, saints, pilgrims, people from all the four castes gather there and participate in that grand yajna.

The Kaveri civilization has built many incredible temples like the one in Kumbhakonam. They are built according to scientific principles. The Rameshwaram temple, Meenakshi temple in Madurai, the temple in Sabarimalai are all examples of this style of architecture and sculpture. Each one is an astounding creation.

All these five civilizations accepted the ideals written in the Vedas. All their religious practices, holy festivals, the almanac, sixteen samskaras, marriage are based on the Vedas. Out of these five cultures, the culture of the Narmada area was basically related to yoga. The people who perform *sakaar upasana*, or worship the form, see god or the divine in statues and in holy places or in that which is external. The people who follow yoga believe that everything is within. In this way, the Narmada culture worshiped the divine within, the Kaveri culture took the form of literature, music, dance and other arts, the Brahmaputra valley brought in the tantra path and the Gangetic civilization came in the form of scriptures, Vedas and Puranas.

Therefore, when people perform the parikrama of the Narmada, the rule is that they have to live like penniless sadhus and survive on whatever they receive as offerings or

alms. These people live in villages, visit two or four homes and beg for food. Nowadays they all have money in their pockets but earlier that was not the case. In earlier times, the Narmada parikrama was only done by sadhus or they were the only ones who were able to do it, other people could not do it. Like the Braj parikrama can be done by anyone, even a grihastha but the Narmada parikrama was only for mendicants.

How can husband and wife maintain mutual understanding in grihastha life?

There are two people in a family and not just one, the man and the woman. But two people have two different minds and two minds can never be the same. Husband and wife have different ways of thinking. If it is only one mind, the household will not work. For a home to run well, it is absolutely necessary that the two wheels are separate to each other. This is for certain.

Men and women have different qualities and it is the blend of their qualities upon which a family runs. If a woman is not able to speak then what is her role in the family? If it is only the man who speaks, what is the sense in that? A wife who speaks is ill-mannered – this is an incorrect way of thinking. After all, it is not only one who has staked a claim to intelligence. Women and men, both have distinct individual qualities.

The most special quality women have is that of discrimination whereas this quality is seen less in men. It is natural for a woman to be virtuous whereas this is not man's natural inclination. This is a very essential quality in order to run a family. The third quality is the ability of discernment and to assess quality. Look at the clothes worn by men and women, you will get an immediate idea of what I am talking about by just looking at the clothes they wear. If a man has to do the cooking at home, he will manage with just dal and rice but look at the variety of dishes that a woman makes. I have noticed this even in business. Whichever field of business are run by women, their quality and their standard is very good. Women pay a lot of attention to quality whereas a man pays

more attention to sales. The man will look out for how he can make the maximum sales whereas the woman will focus on how the product can be made in the best way. Discrimination, virtue and the ability to assess quality – these three qualities which are seen in women, are they something which render a person any less capable?

When the number of hooligans and crooks increases in a society and the king is incapable of providing security, at such times a woman becomes helpless and weak. Women are invaluable members of our society. Do not keep her locked within the four walls of the house, instead make her more capable, make her stronger and more virtuous. It is not necessary that the strong have to be without virtues.



Satsang 13

17 November 1997

This year during Sita Kalyanam, three to four hundred newly-married girls will receive their wedding prasad. This is no ordinary prasad; including jewellery and clothes, the entire wedding suitcase is worth about seventy to eighty thousand rupees. We have established this practice here because all the brides are representatives of Sita. Whatever dowry Sita receives is distributed among these newly-wed brides. I believe that whenever a girl gets married and goes to her in-law's house, she must receive a lot of things from her parents. It is the duty of the parents and they should not be miserly about this. Instead they should give their daughters gold and silver, diamonds and jewellery because a girl is a form of Lakshmi.

The primary shakti of the world or Adishakti is in the form of Devi and the daughter of the house is a part of that Devi. When she goes to another home, she does not go empty-handed. Even the daughter of a very poor family takes something with her. Gold, silver, diamonds and pearls – these are the symbols of Lakshmi. It is not as if one just sends her with a small box of sweets or a little packet of herbal tea! I tell everyone that when you come here for Sita Kalyanam, bring the best sarees available in India. The girls here are very poor. They are all labourers; the daily wage is about thirty or thirty-five rupees. This is the state of all my neighbours. Even if it is just once in their life, but they should wear exquisite sarees like the wealthy people of Delhi. They should wear the same jewellery that you would present to your own daughters, how happy that will make them!

The most important principle of Vedanta is *atmabhava*. *Aham Brahmasmi* is another principle of Vedanta about which some of you may have heard, but more important than that is *atmabhava*. *Atmabhava* means seeing oneself in others. If your son falls sick, you get very worried. When he reaches the zenith of success, your happiness knows no bounds. Does this happen with someone else's son? If your neighbour's son falls ill, you may enquire about what happened, yet it is not a question which has anything to do with your emotions, it is a dry matter-of-fact question. If someone's son becomes a very important person you may say that it is a matter of happiness, but will you really experience that happiness yourself? No, it is just a nominal response which has no feeling in it. When you can connect at an emotional level with a stranger in the same way that you are connected with your own wife or son or daughter, then that is *atmabhava*. To progress along the path of Vedanta, this is a very important experience. It is not possible to have *atmadarshan* or direct experience of the Self without *atmabhava*. See yourself in others and see others in yourself – this is spoken about in the *Ishavashya Upanishad* and in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Atmabhava is a very deep emotion. These girls who are getting married and going to new homes are from very poor families. Even if they get cheap sarees and imitation jewellery, it is something very big for them. Then why should they not be given expensive sarees, beautiful jewellery and imported perfumes? I ask my devotees to bring the most expensive perfumes and soap from Greece, France and Switzerland. Yes, the first thing that comes to my mind is jewellery. The marriage of any girl is incomplete without jewellery and the mangalsutra. They should be of pure gold. I speak very frankly to all my devotees, who are only earning for themselves and spending money only on their wife and children, that they should not spend anything on themselves for one month and use that money to prepare a small marriage gift kit. It should include a beautiful saree, blouse, petticoat, jewellery, footwear, soap, a wristwatch and there should also be similar

gifts for the husband of the bride. What are referred to as *solah shringar* or the sixteen adornments for a woman should all be in that gift set. Along with these, we add a seventeenth one – sanitary napkins - because they are necessary for a girl, and in the villages they do not know about it. It is not even available there. These girls and their parents become very happy with just two things – one, when they see the jewellery their faces light up, and the second one is when they see the sanitary towels they feel very happy that there is one less headache to deal with.

I learnt this *atmabhava* when I came to Deoghar. Before this I used to just talk a lot about the kind of things which I myself did not know. I even spoke a lot about god. The learned scholars first say that god is unknowable, he cannot be known. Then they say he is endless, without beginning as well. Tell me something, if he is beyond the mind and speech then how did you come to know that he is endless and without beginning? How did you even come to know that god is only one? Who knows, they can even be thirty-three crore, you haven't seen anything anyway. Like this, we are all strange intellectuals.

But after coming to Deoghar I heard a clear voice, what you people call *akashvani*. I heard this *akashvani* several times. Like the conversation we are having now, the words were absolutely clear. That was when I said to myself, 'All the knowledge in the world is on one side and having sensitivity, compassion and *atmabhavana* for my neighbours is on the other – Satyananda, make your choice!' It is not necessary that I will reach my destination if I follow the first path but that which can connect you with others, make you one with them, that is what makes you become His. If there is love between us, if your heart is fixed in me and mine is fixed in yours then we become one, isn't it? There is no duality left. There may be two bodies but the souls have become one. So in the same manner, if we can connect with others then we can experience unity. Where is duality after that?

Connecting with another has nothing to do with the intellect; it must happen at an emotional level, at the level

of feelings. I liked this path very much. I used to constantly question myself, 'Satyananda, you speak a lot, you also have a lot of knowledge, but how much do you really know? You have written many books and commentaries. You can speak on any subject. You talk about god for hours on end, but tell the truth. What experience have you had?' The answer I used to get was – zero, nothing, absolutely zero. I used to simply speak like a parrot but after coming here I can say, 'Now I know. I can see beyond the things that are visible to the naked eye.'

That is why I have started the Sita Kalyanam program since last year. The wedding gift sets come here by the truckloads, and the fun of it is that these girls have never ever seen me and they will not see me either. I don't know if I will see them in my life or not. All the girls who have received these gifts, we have never seen each other face-to-face. If I go somewhere, who knows if they will recognize that I am the same Rikhiawale Swamiji. Meaning that in order to establish a feeling of oneness with someone, it is not necessary to meet them in person. Between us and god or between me and you, the relationship of oneness is not a physical one, it is at the level of the soul.

God's creation and his incarnation

This world is god's garden. One side you will find rose bushes with thorns, acacia trees with thorns, poisonous snakes and on the other side you will also find nectar like tulsi and bael leaves. If a garden has only mango trees, that is hardly a garden! There is variety in god's garden. There are divine beings as well as demons. All this is god's creation and god does not do anything himself, he is the non-doer. God only makes a *sankalpa* or a resolution, nothing else. The power of action and wish or *kriya shakti* and *ichcha shakti* belongs to Devi, this power rests within prakriti. If god wishes to incarnate, he only has the power of resolution or *sankalpa*. Without the cooperation of prakriti, he cannot manifest. As soon as he becomes one with prakriti, he becomes subject to all the laws of nature like birth and death.

Whatever happens, everything is the work of prakriti and this prakriti has three *gunas* or qualities – satoguna, rajoguna and tamoguna. All the good and bad things in the world fall within the domain of these three gunas. These three gunas are indestructible, only their proportion changes. The day these gunas are destroyed, nature itself will be finished.

When god makes a sankalpa and incarnates, does he do it for himself?

No, god has no sankalpa of his own or for himself alone, it is the devotees who compel the divine to make a sankalpa. Like the bulb is here and so is the electricity, both are connected with each other, but the bulb cannot light up on its own, someone has to put on the switch. In the same way, when god is compelled by the devotee, the seed of sankalpa which lies within god comes alive. Usually people say that god incarnates to destroy evil but I believe that god incarnates to help devotees.

Let us suppose that you make beautiful garments and you tell people about it, but only when you show them the garments, will anyone buy them, right? Until that time, you are only talking about the formless – ‘beautiful garments, beautiful garments’ but where are those clothes? One can’t see them. Exactly in this manner, god incarnates and takes a physical form to perform his leelas in order to come to the aid of his devotees so that we can meditate upon him, learn from his leelas and spend our short lives of sixty to seventy years peacefully under his shelter and trust. Otherwise our lives are like that of hamsters on a treadmill.

God comes because of the fervent pleas of the devotee – ‘Oh, Lord! You are formless and you are everywhere but we cannot see you. How are we to pray to you? We cannot understand anything.’ That is when god says, ‘All right, I will manifest in the form of Rama. Go on then, sing kirtan to your heart’s content, read the *Ramayana*.’ The devotee finds support through this. If god does not manifest, what will you be able to say about him? God is without duality, eternal,

indestructible, unique but there is no form, no tangible qualities. God took many forms or avatars so that the devotees could have a basis for their devotion, that is really the truth of the matter.

It is the compelling prayers of devotees that awaken the sankapla within god. That is when he takes the help of prakriti and manifests. When he incarnates, he has to live according to prakriti's laws because god is not the doer. He cannot even move his hand or eat by himself. Everything is done by prakriti. Eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, sitting, singing, dancing, walking in the jungle, fighting, falling in love with Sita or breaking the bow – these are the laws of prakriti. When god does anything with the support of prakriti, that is called leela. Like an actor plays the role of a beggar or a dacoit, sometimes he is a king and sometimes he is a thief, but the actor is not like that in reality, is he?

The era of music

Music is progressing along a particular path. There should never be stagnation in any *vidya* or field of knowledge and art. If water does not flow, it rots. The music of today is not like it was two thousand years ago. Whether it is music or literature, arts or science, there should be constant evolution and progress, and it should be in keeping with the conditions and situations of man's life. Today man is fast moving and very sharp. Everything is fast, cars move fast, planes are very fast. Food is cooked quickly, you even go to the toilet and come back very fast. Earlier it used to take half an hour to go into the fields and another half an hour to come back. Now everything is over in five minutes. Everything is fast. In such conditions, man's mind also stays with things that are fast or else it is not able to stop.

There is a great challenge faced by spiritual and devotional music nowadays because western music which has come and is called 'pop music' is neither spiritual nor devotional. I have studied a little bit about music and that is why I am telling you this. This is not really western music, it originated in Africa.

Just because it has come here via the West you are calling it western music. But in reality it is not western music, it is negro music. Negro means black. This is the music of black people. Even when you go to Africa today, when thousands of people sing and dance together, there is an incredible rhythm and beat. Today the music that has come and the dances which you see in the movies, all that left-right-front-back jumping and leaping about, it is all originally from Africa.

Ages ago, this music was in Africa and Asia when there was the continent of Gondwanaland. I am telling you about history, not just two thousand years old but forty to fifty thousand years old. At that time, present-day Australia, Bali, Java, Sumatra, Southern India, the Arabian sea, Bay of Bengal and Africa formed one continent which was called Gondwanaland. Later because of geographical changes, Africa broke off, Australia became a separate part, South India became another part. It joined with northern India, the Vindhya mountains rose up, the Bay of Bengal was formed but the people were the same, the rhythm of the music remained the same. In the villages, don't the people still sing and dance in the same way?

Folk music is something very special, remember this. If you go into the field of music, compose such tunes which people find irresistible and they begin to sway and dance. You cannot call it alcohol if people do not get drunk on it, it isn't poison if you don't die from it, and unless it makes you dance, you cannot call that music. What kind of music is that which makes a man go to sleep! Music is not to make you fall asleep, it is to make you dance.

*Pee le, pee le Hari naam ka pyala;
Use pee kar aur pila kar hoja matwala.*

Drink the cup of the Lord's name.

Drink it, share it and become intoxicated. Sing so much that you become intoxicated. Whether it is music or literature or art, these are eternally evolving vidyas. The Hindi which you

Speak today is hardly the kind of Hindi which was spoken four to five hundred years ago. The Sanskrit which you speak today was not like this in the past. During the time of the Vedas, the Sanskrit which was spoken was very different. Do you wear the kind of clothes that your grandfather or great-grandfather wore? Clothes, architecture, cuisine, medical science, in every field there have been changes and progress. This should certainly take place in the field of music as well. The gypsies who left India centuries ago and migrated to Europe, sing and dance there. They live in Russia, they live in Bulgaria, they are nomads and do not settle down in any one place. Their traditions and music are like those in India. The only difference is that nowadays they dance wearing high-heeled shoes!

The main thing in the coming century is music. That is what will be most popular. Our rishis and munis have said the same thing that liberation will be found in Kali Yuga through the singing of kirtan which is why you should be proficient in music, hold it close to your heart. Whether boys or girls, whether a girl goes to her in-law's house or wherever, music should become the culture of our homes, everyone must learn music. Man has no identity without music, literature and art. Thus says the poet Bhartrihari:

*Sahityasangeetkalaviheenaha
sakshatpashuhupuchchavishanaheenaha.
Temartyalokebhuvibhaaraabhoota
manushyarupenamrugashcharanti.*

Without literature, music and the arts, man is like an animal without a tail and horns. Such people are a burden upon the earth and are only animals roaming around in the guise of men.

We have had many great saints in our country like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Ramakrishna Paramahansa who used to go into a trance and faint while doing kirtan. Mirabai used to be so lost in kirtan that she eventually had to abandon

her home. Mirabai loved kirtan but the members of the royal household in which she lived did not approve of her behaviour. She used to go to temples where they did kirtan and sing and dance. Even a person from an ordinary home will not like it if the daughter-in-law goes and dances like that, and after all, Mirabai was a princess of Chittor. Objections began to be raised. When it reached beyond tolerable limits, the royal household tried to get rid of her. The king sent her a poisoned drink, many means were employed to kill her but somehow she escaped. It is said that Mirabai eventually merged into the formless while singing kirtan, her body was nowhere to be found.

Today even western people have become lovers of kirtan. There they do not have bhajans, they do *naam-sankirtan* or communal singing of the name of the Lord. Many sannnyasins who sing well go there, produce CDs and cassettes and sell them. And it sells very well too.

Know yourself

If there is some illness in the physical body, then there is asana and pranayama to take it away, however, it is not only the physical body which suffers from illness or disease. The mind also falls sick. *Dharana* and *dhyana* or concentration and meditation is the remedy for a sick mind. Again, it is not only the mind which falls sick, but man's soul, his entire being is sick. Just yoga is not the remedy for this. A person should attend satsang where inspiration can be found and where there is an opportunity to look at oneself. When the entire personality becomes sick a person does not say that he is not well, he says 'I am unhappy' or 'I am very sad'. If there is some sickness in the body, then he says there is a problem or there is some pain somewhere else, but when the problem is with the entire personality, he says 'I am facing a lot of difficulties'. What is the difficulty? The son turned out to be no-good or the husband comes home drunk every day, he troubles everyone a lot. This is also a sickness, and the remedy for this does not lie with yoga. Most people in

the world are victims of these kinds of problems. The basic problem is that man's soul is ailing. Stomach ache, pain in the legs or the nose, these are not big ailments. Such ordinary ailments can be treated with small remedies like asana and pranayama. The cure for the larger problems is satsang and *viveka*, discrimination.

Man's greatest weakness and biggest shortcoming is that he has never really looked at himself with his own eyes. What you see in the mirror is not really your face, it is just the reflection of your face. You have not looked at your face with your own eyes. Nobody has seen it. In the same way, there is another flaw which is that man does not know his own mind. The mind is one thing and thoughts are something else, like the bulb and its light. You are not looking at the bulb but all you can see is its light. In the same manner, you can look at your thoughts that you are angry, you are fretting about something, you are feeling tired, you are tense but you are not able to see your mind. Being able to see the mind is the most difficult thing. Anyone who has seen the mind becomes like god. Looking at the mind is what Socrates said, 'Know thyself.' In Tamil, Ramana Maharishi used to say, '*Naan yaar?*' and the Upanishads say, '*Aatmaanamvijnaneemahi*' – Know who I am.

Swami Sivananda used to say that in order to know this, one will have to attend special classes. If you want a BA or BCom degree, you have to enrol in primary school first, you can't go straight to college, in the same way there are different stages or classes in spiritual life. The first class is *seva*, the second one is to be able to love and the third class is where you not only take but you also learn how to give. Serve, love and give – these three form your matriculation. Then come the studies in college – *atmashuddhi* and *dhyana*, self-purification and meditation. After that one is able to see the soul and that is when man is able to know the mind. The day one knows the mind, one becomes as powerful as an atom bomb.

Knowing oneself is the most difficult thing in the world. Out of hundreds of thousands, maybe one person knows

himself. Through psychology, one can become familiar with one's thoughts, one's limitations, but the essential soul is still unknown. You can see the lotus, but you cannot see the muck and mud out of which the lotus grows. One unusual thing about this mind is that it is like muck and it has three ingredients: satoguna, rajoguna and tamoguna. The mind is an amalgamation of these three gunas. Earth, water, fire, wind and ether – these five elements also contribute towards it in perfect proportion. This is the reason why the sadhanas prescribed for yogis and saints are related to these elements.

By learning asana and pranayama, your physical ailments will be cured, but how will you fix the entire personality? Satsang is the remedy for that. Tulsidas has said so in the *Ramacharitanamas*:

*Binu satsang bibek na hoyi;
Raam kripa binu sulabh na soyi.*

Discrimination is not possible without satsang. Rama's grace is what makes everything easy.

Discrimination is not possible without satsang. Discrimination means the ability to distinguish between good and bad, the truth and untruth. All this happens only through the grace of god. If one spends even a little time in satsang, an hour, half an hour or even half of half hour, many problems can be cured:

Tulsi sangat saadhu ki hare koti upadhi.

The company of saints cures a thousand ills.

We have three types of ailments – *aadhi*, *vyaadhi* and *upaadhi*. If you get a fever or develop some pain in your leg – this is called *vyaadhi* or a physical problem. The mind is tense, sleeplessness prevails – such mental ailments are called *aadhi*, and when the entire personality becomes sick, that is called *upaadhi*. Someone refers to himself as 'District Magistrate Mr Malhotra', but his name is Mr Malhotra and District Magistrate is a prefix which is added before the name. In

the same manner, one adds a prefix to oneself that 'I am a being' and along with that comes the feeling of *ahamkar* or a sense of self. One starts identifying oneself as a very learned person or an idiot or that one is a very important person or an ordinary person or that one is a crook or unique in this world. Thinking in this way about oneself, being proud or arrogant is called upaadhi. 'This is my son, this is my daughter, he is my husband, she is my wife, he is my brother, he is my father' – all these are also upaadhis.

When one is fixed upon a certain identity in the mind, it is called upaadhi. You are not sad but you have started to consider yourself as being sad. In the same way, you see yourself as a woman or a man, you think of yourself as either a great person or a criminal. Believing in that which is not true and accepting that is *abhimaan* or pride and it is this very pride which is upaadhi. Many people add a prefix to their names – 'Retired Minister' or 'Retired Collector'. No, just write only your name, what is the need to write 'Retired Collector'? This tail which follows you around is upaadhi.

India's Future

I had visited Gandhi's Sevagram ashram in my childhood, from there I had also gone to his Wardha ashram. This story goes back about sixty years. Anyway, things were very different in those days, but even at that time this country was swinging between hope and despair. Today this country continues to swing between these two states of hope and despair, wondering what the future holds. In those days the main problem was foreign rule and how to shake off those chains. Some said use guns, someone would say there should be open war and others would say, 'Oh, why should we shake them off? Wear a tie and coat, become a petty official and shake hands with the English.' The path shown by Gandhi was liked by all Indians because it was not based on politics but reality. During that time, clothes would be manufactured in Manchester and sent here, hundreds and thousands of people lost their livelihood. In that situation, he got spinning

wheels turning in each home. Using the spinning wheel as a medium, Gandhi reached every home. He showed people that this is also a way. The flame of hope was lit, it flickered and then took hold in the hearts of people and many good people were attracted to his path, whether it was Nehru or Sardar Patel, everyone followed him. Of course, revolutionaries like Subhash Chandra Bose are also respected by the people but Gandhi showed a practical path.

I remember even in those days the question, 'What is to become of this country?' Perhaps this same question arises in the minds of people today, but today's problem is not foreign rule. Today it is something else. I would not say that it is corruption, that is a very ordinary and general term, it is like tiny boils on the body. If there are boils, what is the point of trying any treatment? The problem is in the blood itself. If you use some medicine what will happen is that the boil will go from one place to another one. The root cause of the problem is somewhere else.

Once Swami Ramtirtha had gone to Japan and was a guest of the royal family. In the palace, he noticed tiny maple plants on the table. When his host enquired what he was looking at, he said, "I am looking at these small maple saplings. You must have just planted them." The host answered, "Not at all, they are two hundred and fifty years old." "Two hundred and fifty? In our country they grow to over forty feet in only ten years or so." "These are bonsai." "What is bonsai?" "Three roots are cut off from below. It stays alive but does not grow."

This is the condition of people here. Conduct, personality and thinking – these are the three roots of man's life, out of which you can see two, one is not visible. Man's conduct and personality can be seen, his thoughts cannot. These three roots have been cut.

Then what should we do?

Well, break out of the confines of the pot, go and sit somewhere on the soil or uncultivated earth like I have done. We people belong to the soil. 'I am a wild flower of the forest, not the

adornment of a manicured garden.’ I am not a flower of the garden; I am a flower of the forest. If I had been a flower of the garden I might have become a tehsildar or a sub-inspector. Because I remained a wild flower, I could become what I wished. At some point when I wanted to become a writer, I wrote; when I had the idea that I should roam about the whole world and visit all the great libraries and museums, I did that. Then I thought I should go and see the cultures of different countries, so I did that as well. Then in the end I thought, drop all this and sing the glories of god, I am doing that also now. Even though you may want to do many things, you will not be able to because you are all flowers of carefully cultivated gardens, you are a horticulturist’s delight.

Conduct, personality and thoughts – it is these three which define a man. A slave is one who does not have freedom of choice in relation to these three aspects. There is a kind of slave mentality in our conduct, our personality and our way of thinking. Independent thought does not seem to be possible anywhere. Today there is no one who has the courage to say that he will not get married. The odd one who turns out to be a free spirit like me can do so. Today no one is capable of thinking that one can live a life without getting married. Nobody is able to think that one can have children without getting married. Well, can one not have children without getting married? When one has thousands of followers, why would you produce children? So that they can look after you when you get old and light your funeral pyre? All these disciples are also serving me and as far as the question of lighting my pyre well, I am going to rest in the ground.

What I mean to say is that people do not have their own independent way of thinking. They are all just treading the usual path. The world has changed, needs have changed, the ways of living have undergone a lot of change, even the way of speaking has changed, but man’s way of thinking, which is the real thing in life, has not changed at all; it is the same old outdated and worn-out way. The same old bonds, the same old remorse, the same old social ills, we people have

not been able to come out of them. I don't know what this way is in which we are living.

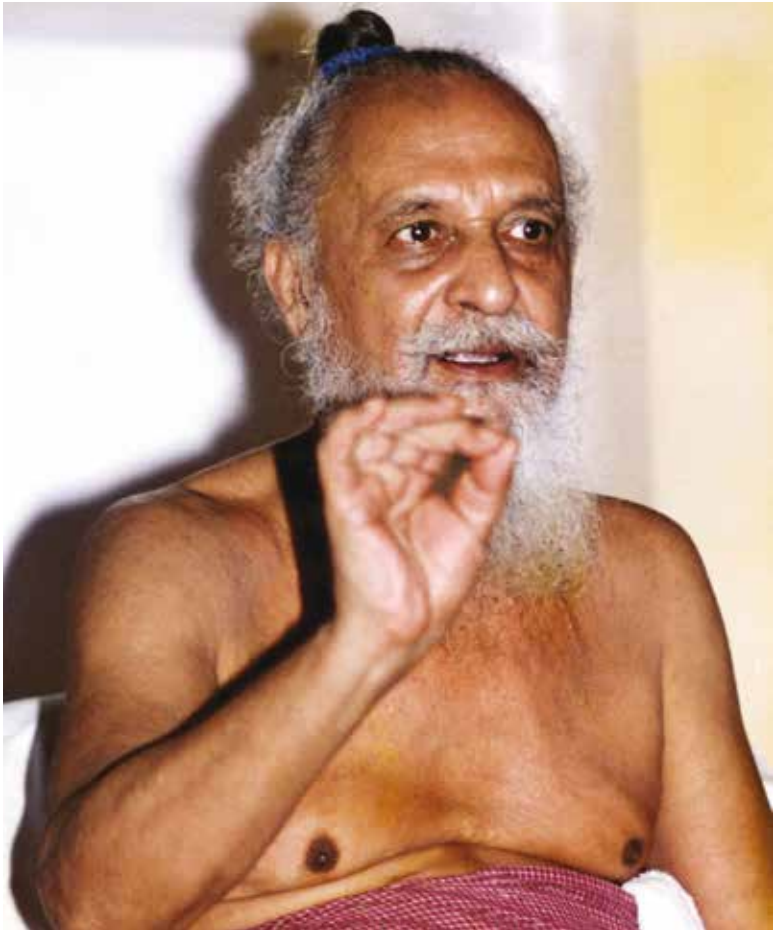
I never talk about corruption and all those things. There is no such thing as honesty and dishonesty, I am telling you this very clearly. It will never go away, but will always remain the way it is today because there is simply no system here. After all, doesn't a company based in America do business in Hong Kong? Don't they run banks in Arabia? The head office of the Boeing company is in Washington but they have factories in China. Is honesty only possible when one is face to face? No, there is dishonesty because there are no proper systems. What is the system you have here? You pay your servant a salary of six hundred rupees, what else can you expect him to be if not dishonest? Pay him six thousand, the very idea of being dishonest will not even enter his head. He will not be able to think about how and where to spend the six thousand rupees. People in other countries pay very well, that is why there is never any question of dishonesty.

People say the corruption will be rooted out by better laws or through preaching or punishment, but nothing is going to improve. Ravana will continue to be born. The most important thing is that there should be an elemental change in the way citizens think, in the collective thinking of the nation's society. Social thought in Europe was just like it is here. I am talking about a period of about two hundred years ago. After that many great social thinkers and teachings came about.

Thinkers like Freud brought Christianity to its knees. Freud was a great psychologist who had a very scientific approach to his theories. He proved all the tenets and beliefs of Christianity wrong. Today western culture and civilization is influenced by Freud's way of thinking. The social rules and laws were influenced by Freud. In the same manner, a scientific attitude came in. Many scientists were killed by priests; you all know about it. The earth is round; the earth revolves around the sun – you all know the stories about scientists like Galileo. Those people wiped out all the beliefs of Christianity and the Bible. Today there are no Christians in Europe. The Christian

religion exists in name alone. We go there, give the geru robes to people, give them malas and shave their heads.

No civilization can progress without independent thinking. This independent thought should include family life, social life, education, science, everything. Change is the principle of life. When winter comes, you wear woollen clothes, in the summer you take them off. When you change your clothing according to the seasons, why then are you unable to change society according to the new conditions and situations?



Satsang 14

18 November 1997

Swamiji, does god also have feelings?

These ideas that you have about god are based upon the beliefs of Christianity. According to the perspective of philosophy, god is simply the witness of each and every event, of everything. God does not do anything, he does not act. *Prakriti* or nature is the doer, the active principle. Now as to emotions or feelings, humans are the ones who have emotions or feelings. Man lives in the realm of nature's laws and so is able to experience as well as express these emotions. When you go beyond the realm of nature, then you transcend emotions, you rise above them.

After all, what is emotion? Joy-sorrow, fear-elation, these are all emotions. Emotions are a kind of reaction. If something nice happens, you feel good; if it is something bad, then you feel bad. If a joyous event takes place, you experience happiness, if there is an accident or a mishap, you become sad. You experience different emotions because of different situations. Now, who is it who is really experiencing these emotions? 'I' am experiencing them. Who am I? The mind. It is my mind which experiences good and bad. If I go mad or I am given some medication which renders me unconscious or I am mentally handicapped or challenged, then I will not experience anything. Emotions are dependent upon the psychological condition of man. There are many categories of emotions. There are also many things depending upon society and culture. Indians happily imbibe cow urine but Europeans do not like it at all. Their feelings and emotions

are different to ours. They will drink wine and be very happy, but Indians will say that it is bad. In this way, your feelings are also based upon your cultural background. God has nothing to do with it.

Does god also experience loneliness?

Yes, why not? It is said in the Upanishads, god is one and there is no other like him. God is immortal whereas everyone else is mortal. God is pure, all others are impure. God is formless, everything else is the form and shape of the world. God has no name while each and every other thing has a name. There is no other like god and that is why god is alone. If you are different from everyone else, even you will feel lonely.

This is not where the story ends. God has the resolve to become many from one. That will not actually take place; it is only a resolve. In order to fulfil that resolve, god has to unite with nature, become one with maya. That is when he becomes the God of Christianity, Allah of the Muslims and Bhagavan of the Hindus, who is worshiped in the church, mosque and temple. That god we can meditate upon, we can experience, we can worship, is the god you are talking to. That is this God. But when god becomes one with prakriti or nature, then the laws and qualities of nature also apply to him. When he incarnates, he becomes one with the qualities of nature.

He is born from a mother's womb, plays like a child. He feels hungry, he feels sleepy. He becomes a youth, he gets married, has children. He is able to love as well as get angry. And in the end, he also dies. Despite all that, he is still god but when he enters into the domain of Nature, he has to accept and follow all nature's laws.

For example, electricity is one form of energy. When it enters a bulb, it adopts all the qualities and laws of the bulb. When it goes into a fridge, it follows all the laws of the fridge. When it is in a heater, then it has to observe the laws of the heater. The energy or power does not have any qualities of its own. It is neither fire nor water, it is totally neutral

or unrelated to both. It is pure energy. When it comes into contact with the bulb, fridge or heater, it takes on all their qualities.

In the same way, when god comes into contact with nature, it is called the *leela* or the play of that behaviour. Exactly like an actor. When a Maharashtrian actor acts in a Bengali play, he behaves like a Bengali, but he is not from Bengal. When he plays the role of a Bengali person, he adopts everything that applies to Bengalis, the language, clothes, behaviour and mannerisms, everything. God is in the same state. You can call that absolute power father, no problem; call it mother, call it brother, it makes no difference at all. For you it is father, for me it is mother. When he becomes part of your religion, he becomes your father, when he becomes one with mine he becomes my mother, but god is beyond all this. Now, what is the point in discussing about such a god who we are not able to know?

We talk about that god who is close to us. People like you who are devotees of god find it extremely difficult to think about a formless god. They pray, 'Oh god, who are you? How can I experience you, how can I sing your praise, where are you?' That is when a resolve arises within god, 'I should take birth'. He incarnates only for us. What can you say about that god who is unknowable? It is only because of my prayer, your prayer, all our prayers that god said, 'I should take birth'. Sometimes he is born in Israel, sometimes he takes birth in India. He was born many times in India because the people here are very nice! At one time he was born as a kshatriya warrior, at another time it was in the form of the flute-playing, singing, dancing Gopal, another time he came as Buddha, the preacher. When he incarnated in human form, you liked him, you wrote prayers and poems to him, sang songs, painted his pictures, you sang the glories of his grace and about the compassion, beauty and valour. He took birth for us so that we can come close to him, feel devotion towards him.

Are you able to understand what I am saying? God does not take birth to kill anyone, but incarnates for the good of

his devotees. Each devotee wishes to see his lord, wants to know him and experience him but he finds it difficult. That is why he needs to be given some help. If a child starts to drown in the river, what will you do? You will jump into the river and save him, won't you? In the same manner, god does not have any emotions but when he takes birth in order to aid his devotees as Christ, Rama, Krishna or Buddha, at that time, emotions are born within him.

At one time you had mentioned that akharas were established during Mughal rule with the intention of opposing them. That was their purpose then, but what is their role today?

Akharas have been like old forts for sannyasins. In olden days it was seen that there were some people who did not wish to be tied down in wedlock. Sometimes due to too much social pressure, even if they did agree and got married, they also managed to extricate themselves from that situation and became free. Not everyone is cut out for marriage or wishes to get married. In reality, marriage is not a democratic system anyway. It is not dependent upon an individual's likes or dislikes. It is a social choice. Society has created this tradition and rule according to which you are forced to get married, there is no other alternative. If people are given the freedom to choose, more than half the population in the world will simply not get married.

Our ancestors understood this and made a system whereby before the age of twenty-five, one should not get married. Until that time, a person is not ready and is not capable of taking decisions. Not everyone is eligible to cast a vote, in the same way for when it comes to marriage one should have the right to choose. After the age of twenty-five, one can choose whether to get married or not. One is able to understand one's own psychological predilections, understand one's sexual needs, be clear about the depth of one's insecurities and then make a decision about whether or not to get married.

Those who decide to get married enter the grihastha ashrama and those who do not wish to get entangled in

the bonds of marriage go and live in akharas. Akhara is an institution which has an *acharya* or a head. We have different kinds of akharas for various kinds of people. For the intellectuals and educated people, there is the Niranjani Akhara. People like lawyers, professors and lecturers join this akhara. The physically strong people, those who smoke chillums and get into confrontations, they join the Juna Akhara and become Naga Babas. Then there is the Nirmali Akhara where people from different traditions, like Sikhs and others go. There are many kinds of akharas which have been around from ages gone by. There have been changes in their functioning from time to time.

The akharas in those days were made to look after the Rama temple in Ayodhya. Today the controversy that is raging about the Ram Janmabhoomi, that place was under the control of the akharas. The akharas existed from the time of Akbar's reign. In those days they did not have any political role. Even before the coming of the Mughals, from the time of Emperor Ashoka's reign, there have been continuous attacks on India. The reign of Chandragupta Maurya was very strong. He drove all the Greeks out of India, but after Ashoka's reign the country became very weak as he declared unilateral disarmament and disbanded the army. The sale of poison was banned in the markets. All the materials that were used in the production of arms and weapons were banned and a stop was put on their trade. In this way the country became very weak and the onslaught of attacks from outsiders increased.

There was a flood of innumerable invasions. Many people began to flee the country. People from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and the border territories started fleeing. All the gypsies in Europe are from India and are people who fled about eight or nine hundred years ago. They were not just in the hundreds but by hundreds of thousands. They were massacred in large numbers on the way in northern Afghanistan and that was why the area became known as Hindukush. 'Kush' means murder, you are familiar with the

word '*khudkushi*', right? It means suicide. There was mass murder of Hindus there which is why that mountain was named Hindukush.

In this way, hundreds of thousands of people fled the country. The people from Punjab fled towards the West. People from Uttar Pradesh went towards Nepal. Nepal made itself totally separate from India in order to retain its own security. It is very difficult to get to Nepal. Brahmins went in great numbers to the South. All the Iyers, Iyengars and others went from North India and took Sanskrit and the Vedas along with them. All this happened about seven to eight hundred years ago and went on until the time of Akbar. Akbar put a stop to it. He was a very benevolent ruler. His queen was Hindu, he used to observe all the Hindu festivals and special events. During his reign, India became peaceful again.

There was peace even during the reign of Jahangir. Things went all fairly well in Shah Jahan's time as well. By the time Shah Jahan assumed the throne, the English and Portuguese began to appear in India but they were not allowed to trade or given any other facilities. Akbar flatly refused and so did Jahangir but Shah Jahan cut them some slack. They received a little bit of permission to trade here and there. You all know the story that followed.

When people were fleeing by the thousands during the Mughal period, the akharas became active. The entire community of sannyasins came together as one. Generally, we people do not involve ourselves in any such activities where there is violence. Sannyasins are the caretakers and protectors of the scriptures and spiritual traditions. They do not involve themselves in politics and fighting, but sometimes it does happen when they have to fight in order to protect dharma. Around that time two big movements were initiated almost simultaneously. The first was the opposition of akharas and the ensuing struggle, but they limited their fight to the protection of religious and spiritual places. There was no other opposition, not from the kings and rulers.

The other great movement which began was the bhakti movement of sadhus like Tulsidas, Mirabai, Sahjo Bai, Charandas, Kabirdas, Surdas and Keshavdas. This movement grew in strength from the time of Humayun upto Shah Jahan's rule. It saw the rise of several great saints and poets in the Vaishnava and Shaiva tradition. There were the Alvars and Nayanar saints in the South who sang bhakti hymns in sweet voices. There was such sweetness and magic in the songs of the bhakti saints that people from Hindu and Muslim traditions were greatly influenced by them.

*Aval Allah noor upaya, kudrat ke sab bande;
Ek noor se sab jag upaja, kaun bhale kaun mande?*

There are one hundred paths – from Allah to others,
All are Nature's creation. The whole world springs
from just one source; Who is to say which one is better
than another.

In this manner, both the akharas as well as the bhakti movement started almost simultaneously and both flourished. Then came the reign of Aurangzeb. He was a very orthodox and fundamentalist ruler and during his reign Hindus began to flee from India again. Around that time, kings like Shivaji came to power as well. You all know about that history. The purpose of akharas is not to fight. No, the role of sannyasins is very clear. Their mandate is to protect dharma and the Sanatana tradition.

Nowadays what kind of activities are conducted by the akharas?

Akharas are spread all over India. Their sadhus and sannyasins are present throughout the country. Today there are three primary vaidic denominations or communities – Dashnami, Udasi and Vairagi. The foundation of the present denomination of Dashnami sannyasins was laid during the reformation carried out by Adi Shankaracharya. He reorganized the sannyasa tradition and established

the Dashnami community. Guru Nanak's son, Shrichand established the Udasi community and the Vairagi community was set up by Swami Ramananda in Ayodhya. He is the same Swami Ramananda who was the guru of Sant Kabir.

Wasn't a sannyasa tradition also established by Swami Dattatreya?

He had established an akhara which later became famous as the Juna Akhara. Dattatreya precedes Shankaracharya. After he started the akhara, he used to give sannyasa diksha to everyone without bothering about their religion, community or caste. Whoever wished to follow the path of the divine used to be given diksha by him. He did not distinguish between whether they were good or bad, cheats, thieves or dacoits. He did not pay any heed to anything, he gave diksha to everyone. His akhara used to be called Juna; '*juna*' means old.

Were akharas active or dormant during the British time?

Regardless of the kind of attitude the British had in relation to the financial or political systems in this country, their behaviour towards religions was never bad. The British were secular in their approach. They never interfered in the matters pertaining to sannyasins, they were primarily interested in money and did not really bother about your religion.

Swamiji, people say that the British looted gold, diamonds and precious stones from many big temples. Is this true?

No, that is not the case. If anything was taken, it would have gone into the government treasury. Such things were taken by the British from kings, nawabs and businessmen.

The people whom you call British, belong in reality to the Anglo-Saxon race. They are not the original inhabitants of England. They came to England from outside, were victorious in battle and then settled down there. Today it is these people who are very interested in studies and research. They enriched the English language. There isn't a single

subject on which you cannot find a book in the English language. You will find books in English from religious and spiritual sciences to the science of love. Once I was very surprised to find a book in English on the Kanphata yogis. This is the sect of Gorakhnath. There was a research conducted on them and a very good historical book was published.

About fifty years ago I saw a huge book weighing over fifteen pounds. It had been published at the time when Warren Hastings was the Viceroy of India. The name of the book was *Hindu Pantheon* or 'Congregation of Hindu Gods'. Starting from Ganapati, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rudra, Lakshmi, Hanuman, Chandi and many others are written about in a scholarly manner. This book was printed using a wooden typeset in England. Somebody had presented that book to Swami Sivananda. I used to be the ashram librarian and that is why I had to carry that heavy book to him. There is a detailed study on the different kinds of *tilak* (caste marks worn on the forehead) used by all the different communities. It even mentions the time periods during which specific kinds of tilaks were used by the different communities, this is the extent of detailed research which is found in that book.

The point I am making is that these Anglo-Saxon people are very scholarly. They are very drawn to studies, research and writing, they have a lot of interest in such things and at the same time they also like to earn money. They are traders, pure businessmen. They will do anything for money, but as far as religion goes, they have a very open mind. Whether it is the ashram of Swami Sivananda, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramtirtha or Mahesh Yogi, you will find that the majority of sannysains are from the Anglo-Saxon race. They are very comfortable about changing their clothes, they even keep a tuft of hair, wear the sacred thread, chant the name of Rama, they have no problem with any of that. So though there may have been some mistakes made by the odd Englishman in matters relating to religion but it was not the policy of the rulers at all.

The truth is that Queen Victoria had summoned a teacher from India in order to learn yoga. She used to practise yoga. Now you tell me which people in the world have given the maximum support and protection to yoga? Which is the place where sannyasins do not face any difficulty in doing their work, where even if young children wish to take sannyasa there is no objection in the family, where if people wish to have their new spiritual name in their passports as their legal name it is immediately accepted? Is there such a country?

You can do all this in Anglo-Saxon countries. You can do this in America, Australia and England, but it is not possible in Greece, Spain and France. In England if I give the name 'Swami Pragyamurti' to someone, she will go to the court and file an affidavit stating her intention, change her name to Swami Pragyamurti and go to the passport office and change her earlier name and make it 'Swami Pragyamurti'. This is not possible in other countries which is why it is difficult to accept that the British would have meddled with religion. Yes, the odd official here or there may have done something wrong, after all there are rascals everywhere.

Did the British permit Indians to openly celebrate festivals like Holi and Diwali?

Look, there are no Hindu temples in Spain, there are no Hindu temples in Greece, there are no Hindu temples in Italy, there are no Hindu temples in France but they are in England, in America and Australia. It is not like they are only being made in today's times. In these countries, people could make temples whenever they wanted. It was due to monetary reasons that it was not possible earlier. Poor people went to England to earn a living, where were they going to find the means to build temples? Now they have become prosperous and are going ahead with great gusto. There is a Swaminarayan temple in England. What a temple it is! Perhaps it is the grandest and most beautiful temple of them all. There are huge granite statues of Shiva and Nandi in the town of Honolulu, America. They were flown out from India

in a special airplane and installed there. I have seen that temple; the statue of Nandi is as big as the ones one can see in Madurai and places like that. In America's Vrindavan, the Hare Rama Hare Krishna people have a very big Krishna temple. There American girls dressed in sarees and wearing their hair in long plaits clean the floors all day. I mean to say that in any country, the citizens should be free to practise any religion they choose.

There are no such temples in Spain because the constitution of Spain does not permit any other religion to establish their own places of worship there. Just recently over the last five years they have made some study into this law, but then there are no wealthy Indians there who can build such temples either. After all, in order to get a temple made wealthy people are needed, crores of rupees have to be given by them.

But your ashrams have been in Spain, Greece, France and such places for quite a long time now.

There is a difference between temples and ashrams. A temple is a religious place whereas an ashram is not. An ashram can well belong to religious people, can belong to Hindus, but it does not come in the category of religious places. Nowhere in the world are ashrams counted as religious places. Temples are definitely considered as religious places.

In those countries people perform worship but in their own homes in a personal and private manner. A temple means such a communal place where many people can gather, like in a park, library, railway station or airport. A temple is not private. Personal or private temples are called *thakurbadi*. That can be made in one's own personal home and courtyard. A temple is a place which is open to the general public for at least two, four or six hours a day.

There has been mutual enmity between many countries, like Greece and Turkey, India and Pakistan. Do you think that if the governments, leaders and media do not interfere

then the people of those countries can live together in brotherhood and peace? If not, what other means are there?

This is a very difficult matter. Everything takes place according to the natural laws of prakriti. According to this natural law, it is also possible that after a few generations the two countries can become friends. I will give you a small example. There was no political contact between China and Japan for almost two thousand years. Then Buddhism reached China. Buddhism had spread to Tibet through Acharya Dipankar and then went to China with Acharya Padmasambhava. After it reached there, it began to spread like wildfire.

From China the teachings of Buddha reached Japan. The Japanese people used to follow a native religion called Shintoism. When they received information about the Buddhist faith and studied the Buddhist scriptures, they were deeply influenced by them. Then they wanted to send some people directly to India for more information. First a businessman agreed to come to India, but due to some reason, he was unable to make the visit. Then they wanted to send a monk from the Shinto community. Even that was not possible. The Japanese made many attempts but they were unable to get to India. When direct contact with India proved difficult, the Japanese improved their relations with China. They established a political relationship with China. After that, Japanese scholars went to China, studied Sanskrit, then they brought the Tripitaka and other Buddhist scriptures to Japan. In this way, over time even enemies became friends. Today the relations between India and Pakistan are not good. It is possible that the next generation will think, 'what is the use of all this fighting, India is a huge market, it has a population of over one hundred crores. Why don't we increase our mutual trade instead?' This kind of thinking can change everything.

This is a practical perspective to life and at the right moment it becomes the deciding factor for relationships between two countries. After all, how much fighting and struggle we had with the British! Gandhi's struggle was based

on non-cooperation and non-violence, and on the other hand Subhash Chandra Bose formed the Indian National Army to fight against them. They fought with guns and bullets. Today we have become good friends because we know that they have very good technology and they know that a huge market is available in India. Today's generation thinks along these lines. Once the new generation sees a change in their financial and religious thought processes, the relationships between countries will change completely.

There is a problem between Turkey and Greece on the issue of Cyprus. The archbishop of Cyprus is a very good friend of mine; we correspond regularly with each other. When he had to leave that place and go to England, he wrote to tell me that he had to flee. These political and religious problems exist because there is a problem in the way people think; their perspective is wrong. They only think along geographical and historical perspectives, but life has its own realities. Money, business and trade, children, their health, their education, people don't think about all this. 'Even if I am killed, it does not matter', they think like this and go to war, the wife becomes a widow and the children are orphaned.

No, we must not think like this. 'Why should I lose my life for nothing? My children will die of starvation' – we must have a practical approach to life. Under such conditions, the feeling of mutual friendship will come about automatically and gain momentum. Recently the relations between India and China were not good, but now there is an increase in the friendly attitude towards each other because both have become aware of their own difficulties. China has to spend billions of dollars on protecting its borders. Even India spends a fortune to protect that no-man's land from which there is nothing to be gained. Neither is there any glory attained, nor is there any harvest or crop to be reaped there. Then why waste national wealth on it? India realized this. China also thought something along these lines. Then the relationship between them improved a little. After all, we have to adopt a realistic and practical approach, isn't it?

Politics is not dependent only upon the politicians or the media. It also depends upon the practical perspective of the people. We are the ones who take the decision about what has to happen, not the media. If the people of this country, if the people of Greece, if the people of Turkey start thinking that what kind of stupidity are we doing, so much money is being spent on the armed forces and to protect borders, the tide of history will change. If they start thinking that we are becoming impoverished by spending this fortune on weapons and the countries who are selling us the arms are getting rich, it will be another matter altogether. The countries which sell these weapons think that the Greeks and Turks are fools and idiots to buy these weapons from us and fight with each other. What do we lose? Let them keep fighting, we will sell them more arms. That is exactly what they are doing in Iraq. First of all France, England and America equipped Iraq with arms and ammunition and later they destroyed it. After ten to fifteen years of this mammoth destruction, they will equip Iraq with weapons again. In fifteen years, the sales will double. We know about this game which is why they cannot fool us. In the rest of the world their games continue.

War will never end in the world. It is only through struggles that new civilizations and cultures have developed. If all struggle ends and there is widespread peace everywhere, then the progress and momentum of mankind will also end. It is through strife that momentum develops. Even the wheels of an engine start moving only when there is friction. That is why there should be struggle and strife. Prakriti which is made up of tamoguna, rajoguna and sattwaguna will compel this strife to take place.

If peace were to abound everywhere, would it not make life boring and colourless?

Which is why this will never happen. If you only have hot weather for twelve months of the year or it is always spring, that is not good. There should be spring, summer, there should also be monsoon, it should get very hot, there should

be a lot of rain, it should get cold and the temperatures should drop, that is wonderful. Change is absolutely essential. Sometimes you wrap yourself up in woollens, at other times just a cotton shirt will do. There should be variety in life.

This world has evolved only because of strife and struggles. If there is no strife in life, there will be no progress either. Those races which have faced strife are the ones who have come up and done well and those who have not been able to rise up. They get two meals a day, that is the extent of their progress and it has not gone beyond that. It is struggle which makes a man and society progress. There will be fights and wars, the world is not only composed of one single element; it is made up of three elements. And since the world is made up of these three elements, sometimes tamoguna will rule, at other times, rajoguna will have the upper hand. We have people with a predominance of sattwaguna as well as people who are rajogunis. Never mind people, even within you there are three gunas. Look within yourself, the mind is made of a blend of the three gunas. The coming together of five tattvas has created the physical body.

Today there is fighting between India and Pakistan, but one day it will all be sorted out. Earlier there used to be a lot of enmity between people belonging to the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects. There were violent fights, heads used to roll, reigns used to be disrupted. That is how much they used to fight. You will find a glimpse of that in the Puranas. Today Shiva and Rama are both seated in the same temple, there is no fight. Earlier Shaivites were not permitted into Vaishnava temples, they used to say, 'Get out! You are an untouchable!' but now everything is okay. Today, Vaishnavas even eat onion and garlic, it makes no difference. What I mean to say is that fighting is a law of nature and as long as there is this strife and friction, mankind will progress. The day all fighting ceases in the world, the entire world will be finished.

As far as races, communities and countries go, a lot of things from the old days do not hold true anymore. In the last

two thousand years, there has been so much intermingling that it is hard to say who belongs to which race or which country. You will find Greek blood in Bihar and Bihari blood in Greece. About two thousand years ago, Alexander came to India and returned after he won the war, but some of his people stayed on. His commanders came up to Patna and were defeated there. Hindu kings married Greek women. Chandragupta Maurya married Helena, the daughter of the Greek general, Seleucus Nicator. Their descendants like Ashika, Ajatashatru and Sanghamitra had Greek blood in them.

After that, the British came. Many British women married Indian men and many Indian women married British men. They were called Anglo-Indian. That is why it is hard to say who is a Dravidian, who is Anglo-Saxon, who is Slavic. Thousands of gypsies went to Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, France and Czechoslovakia from India. They must have so many children, now who can say that all the gypsy children are pure gypsies? So many children were born to gypsy fathers and Bulgarian or Romanian mothers. Such things keep on happening. You cannot put a stop to it. There has been so much intermingling of blood that all of us belong to mixed races.

That is why it is no use saying that we are Aryan, you are Semitic or Indo-European. The same goes for countries too. After all, what is a country? A country is that geographical space over which you have won a victory because you are powerful. If you look at old maps of India, they will look totally different. During my childhood, Burma was a part of India. I have studied the geography and history of Burma when I was in school. And even before that time, Indonesia, Thailand, Bali, Sumatra, Cambodia were all a part of Indian territories. Go to Cambodia, you will find a huge Hindu temple there called Angkor Vat. There are statues of Brahma, Vishnu and other gods and goddesses. Not small statues, but they are gigantic ones. Now the Indian government is giving funds and special assistance to restore that temple.

In the West, India ruled up to Afghanistan. Today if you visit Afghanistan, you will find ruins of Buddhist stupas and monasteries. There were many Buddhists there, I saw so many things in every little village that I had thought of writing it all in my diary. Then I thought how much can I write? It is the same everywhere.

Swamiji, we saw incredible statues of kundalini and serpents in a museum in Italy.

Before the Roman era and even during the reign of the Roman Empire, before and after the period of Sri Rama there were some other races of people whom the Romans called barbarians. Those people used to worship Shiva. That is why Shivalingams have been found. There is one such Shivalingam even in the Vatican museum.

Anyway, this was the spread of religion, but what I mean to say is that whichever part of the earth you conquer, that becomes the definition of your country. This is applicable as long as you are powerful. At one time the boundaries of your country included Afghanistan, Burma and Thailand. When these regions slipped out of your hands, your country became smaller. Later when your power reduced further, Pakistan and Bangladesh were cut off and became separate. Now you have no authority over Pakistan and Bangladesh. You cannot say that they are a part of your country. Yes, you can make the claim that regardless of the fact that the religions in these countries are now different, their blood, their language and their culture is the same. What is the difference between the Punjabis from Delhi and Punjab and those from Pakistan? They also eat parathas and drink lassi made from yoghurt. The same Punjabi mode of dressing is seen here and there as well. What is the difference between the Pashtuns of Kashmir and Baluchistan? Both speak the same Pashtu language. There is no difference in culture, the music is the same, the dances are the same. The manner in which men and women speak is the same. So much so that even the same superstitions exist in both places.

After all, what is the difference between the people of Pakistan and India? Is there any difference other than the geographical one? The music of both countries is the same. *Teen taal, kaharwa, chautal*, all the musical beats and rhythm are the same. The style of singing, the *alap* and *gamak* is the same. The way of cooking is the same. The same masalas, same salt, the same traditions of eating as well. Isn't that so? The language is the same, the physical structure is the same, the same idiosyncrasies and inflections, so what is the difference? It is in the distribution of inheritance. Two brothers divided their inheritance.

The younger brother and the elder brother, don't they fight amongst each other? We have separated ourselves. We were forced to separate, so we fight with each other, but after sometime the head will sort itself out. Religion is just a standpoint, it is not the root cause of the fight. We are not fighting with each other because they are Muslims and we are Hindus, but because we were brothers, and due to some issues the inheritance and legacy was divided and we became separate. Don't two brothers fight with each other? This land is barren, I should have got that portion of land. That is the fight which is going on.

There is no fight between religions and in actual fact there is no difference between Vedanta and Islam. Neither does Vedanta believe in idol worship, nor does Islam. The first mantra of Islam is *La illah il Allah*, apart from the one god, there is no other. In Sanskrit we say the same thing – *eko Brahma, dvitiyonasti*. In Islam there is no worship unless they wash their hands and feet first, we also enter temples only after washing ourselves. From a philosophical perspective, Vedanta and Islam are similar.

Every religion has two aspects, one is *karmakanda*, rituals, and the other is *darshan*, philosophy. The philosophy of Islam is called Sufi. The word 'sufi' is derived from the Greek word 'sophia' which means *vidya*, knowledge. Sufi means *brahmavidya*, knowledge of the divine. What do Sufi saints say? The divine is my beloved and I am his lover. The bond

between the divine and myself is one of love, whereas between you and me the bond is of desire. Love is called 'ishq' by Sufis. Loving the real thing or the eternal and divine is called 'ishq hakiki' and desiring the changing and untrue is called 'ishq mizazi'. The love that you have for your children, your family, your wealth, your property and legacy or even your own body is ishq mizazi.

The Sufis say that ishq hakiki is the true path. Ishq hakiki and bhakti is one and the same thing. In the same way, ishq mizazi and desire is the same thing. These teachings of Sufism are also the teachings of Vedanta. Vedanta finds expression through bhakti and there is bhakti amongst the Sufis too. Sufis are very drawn to music, we believe in kirtan. Sufis have their own distinctive style of dance and here we have Bharatnatyam and Kathakali. Dance is a divine art. Radha, Krishna, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mira – they all used to dance.

Advaita philosophy is all right in its own place, but then some questions arise. I accept that I love god, but what is the relationship between god and me? Who created this entire universe? At such times, apart from Advaita, another philosophy becomes necessary which believes in three things – god or the divine, the individual and creation. This philosophy is called 'Traita' in Sanskrit and you can also call this the philosophy of the Christian religion. The most important element in Christianity is prayer and the same thing is seen in the bhakti of Mirabai, Tulsi or Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

There is another thing which merits attention. The progress or evolution of any religion is influenced by the political situation in society and the geographical climate. On one hand, the source of Vedanta was along the banks of rivers which flow down from the forests of the Himalayas, whereas Christianity was born in the hot, waterless deserts. It is but natural that there will be differences. Everything cannot be the same. You go to Kulu-Manali, you will find a different inspiration. Go to Yamunotri-Gangotri, sit beside the river

there, the experience is different. Go to a desert where not a single tree is to be seen, the experience will be different. The people will also be different. During the time of Christ, even the political situation was not good. The Jewish people were ruled by the Roman Empire, they were very poor. Jesus Christ himself became a target of the Roman rulers.

On the other hand, the Vedas and Vedanta were born in a country where rishis and munis could have independent ideas and thoughts. They were not worried about anything. It is only natural that the philosophy and teachings of such independent reflections and thoughts will be different. When Jesus Christ taught, he spoke on compassion, love, friendship, tolerance and forgiveness. Why? Because these positive qualities were lacking in society during that period. People were cruel, that is why it was necessary to teach them compassion. A saint only gives teachings about those things which are lacking in society. Such was the state of the society in which Jesus Christ spent his life.

He did not live in that society for long. When he first left Israel, he went to Rome, then he went to Iraq and thirteen to fourteen years after the crucifixion he came to Kashmir with his mother. He did not die on the cross. The church may well disbelieve this, but many learned scholars have written books on this, and when I was in Italy, many people gave me these books.

Christians believe in the resurrection of Christ after the crucifixion. So, is that not true?

Well, to have the answer to that you will have to give the correct explanation of the term 'resurrection'. After all, it is just a word. After my demise, people in India will not say that Swamiji has died, they will say that he is absorbed into Mahasamadhi. In the same way, at that time people did not say that after having been on the cross Christ became all right, recovered and was well, but they said that he was resurrected. The fact is that he did not die on the cross, he was taken down, away from there and he received treatment. For some

time he lived in the city of Rome, after that he stayed in a place called Kur in Iraq and after thirteen-fourteen years he reached Kashmir along with his mother, Mariam. His grave is in Srinagar, I have seen it. His mother's demise also took place in Kashmir and Mariam's tomb is there. These are facts accepted by Indians. As long as religion is religion, whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islam, it is ours, but when the religion becomes something other than religion, then we do not accept it. Religion should remain religion, it should not be tied up with political leaders. Religion is a very pure and holy thing, like milk, even a drop of anything sour spoils it immediately.



Satsang 15

19 November 1997



It is very difficult to live at home with the feeling of sannyasa. If you ask me, even in sannyasa it is very difficult to live with this attitude because even after renouncing everything, after leaving your home and family, the blissful life and the non-attachment of sannyasa, the quality of not worrying about anything – this is not being done even by sannyasins. Everyone is subject to the compulsions of culture, society and the compulsions of one's own mind. That is why I say that sannyasa ashrama is very difficult.

Householder life, however, is even more difficult. There are economic pressures, social pressures, cultural pressures. A

householder's condition is like Arjun's state, who had entered the battlefield to wage war but then said he would not fight. He saw his uncles, cousins and nephews on the battlefield and said that he could not fight.

Even though the Lord himself told him, he did not accept it straightaway, isn't it?

Look, it is like this – a dog's tail is never straight. There is only one method to straighten it; it should be cut. You are not able to understand one point. This whole world has been created by god. You say 'I wonder what entered his head that made him create an incomplete man?' When it is an accepted fact that the world has been created by god, all the creatures in it have also been created by him, then he has also created beings like Shiva's ganas. Some of them have a mouth in the stomach, some have noses where there should be eyes, some have eyes instead of noses, you understand? The mother gives birth to the child, but when the mother tries to make the child understand something, the child is not able to do it. Though the child loves the mother very much, but he is not able to accept what his mother is saying because when the mother gave birth to the child, a different personality came into the child. The body was given by the mother, the seed came from the father, but the personality is different, another soul entered into the child. That soul will definitely express itself.

In the same way, when god created the world he infused some *guna* or quality into everything. Each person behaves according to that *guna*. Arjun was filled with the kshatriya or warrior *guna*, and Karna was filled with the debilitating experience of being an illegitimate offspring. This feeling stayed within him all the time in the form of low self-esteem. Duryodhana was filled with ambitions 'When will I become the crown prince, when will I become the king?' Snakes were filled with venom, tulsi was full of amrita or ambrosia and purity was filled into the water of the Ganges. At whichever point in time anything manifested in creation, the three *gunas*

became part of it – tamoguna, rajoguna and sattwaguna. That is why despite Sri Krishna explaining things to Arjuna, he was not able to understand.

Arjuna became depressed. Why does depression happen? Because of stress. What is stress? Stress is experienced when you are not able to make sense of anything. Arjuna was not able to make sense of what was taking place. He is wielding the bow and sword, ready to ascend straight into heaven. The call for launching the attack into battle was all that was remaining, and just then he sees Bhishma Pitamaha, he sees Dronacharya, Duryodhana and Dusshasana, he sees his brothers and nephews. ‘My God! Will I have to kill my own kith and kin?’ He was not able to figure out whether he should kill them or not. He experienced extreme stress and after that he suffered a nervous breakdown. It is written in the *Gita*:

*Seedanti mama gaatraani mukham cha parishushyati;
Vepathushcha shareere me romaharshashcha jaayate.
Gaandeervam sramsate hastaat twak chaiva paridahyate;
Na cha shaknomyavasthaatum bhramateeva cha me manah.*

My limbs fail and my mouth is parched up, my body quivers and my hairs stand on end! The (bow) ‘Gandiva’ slips from my hand and my skin burns all over; I am unable even to stand, my mind is reeling, as it were. (1:28 and 29)

According to medical science, these are all signs of a nervous breakdown. In such a condition how would Arjun have been able to understand anything that Krishna said? The electricity is there but the bulb has fused, so how can it light up?

Understand one more thing. The formless god who has no qualities, who is the non-doer and the non-enjoyer, for whatever reason he takes human form, he comes within the domain of Nature and does not remain independent. All the qualities of Nature come into him. You are a respectable person from an eminent family, but tomorrow I cast you in the role of a joker for a film. When you accept this role, all

the laws that apply to a joker will apply to you. You will have to act like a joker, you cannot say that I am a very important person, I will not play the fool. God is *sat-chit-ananda*, you have read it in all the books, that is all correct but the moment god becomes part of Nature, all the laws of nature like birth and death, success and failure, joy and sorrow, elation and depression, boundaries and restrictions, all of them are applicable to god. This is the law:

Prakritimsvaamadhishtthayasambhaamyatmamaayayaa.

I am born after accepting Nature as my supreme ruler.

Always remember that god is the non-doer, he is neither the creator of sorrow or happiness. The doer is Prakriti, Nature. Who is Prakriti? The maya or illusion of god is called Prakriti. She is called by many names like Adya and Janani. This Prakriti has three gunas or qualities. There are two elements present in water, hydrogen and oxygen, in the same way Prakriti has three elements – sattwaguna, rajoguna and tamoguna. The funny thing is that the very same Prakriti, which creates everything, decides on birth and death, gives you joy and sadness, makes you laugh and cry, is totally inert in herself. Like the light bulb is inert, it is not conscious but it is that which gives light. Remove the bulb, light is gone.

Prakriti unites with Purusha and becomes conscious. Prakriti cannot act on her own, she needs to make god her ruler. In this way, it is through the union of Purusha and Prakriti that this entire creation is born. In this situation, despite being told by Sri Krishna, Arjuna is unable to understand. That is completely all right or logical because Sri Krishna himself is also limited and tied by maya. In actual fact, he was acting according to the script of the film. Prakriti wrote a script for him that you will do this, you will do that, and that is exactly what he was doing. This is called leela. *Leela* means acting.

Singing the name of the Divine

Even if one's mind is not drawn towards singing the Lord's name, one should still do it. Even if you are not interested in reading the *Ramayana*, you should do it. People eat rasgullas even if they are not hungry, don't they? *Bhava-abhavaana khaaalasahoon; naamjapata mangaldisi dasahoon* – whether you chant with feeling or without feeling, whether you read in languor or carelessness, even if you say it incorrectly, but the name of the god always brings auspiciousness, like the wheat seed which can be sown straight or upside-down but always grows upright.

Anyway, who is forcing people to chant the Lord's name, if you don't wish to do it, don't chant, but people are so lazy about chanting the name of the Lord. They do not make as many excuses for any other activity. 'Oh, we can't manage this worship of the form' – this is one excuse. 'Rama was a historical figure, not god' – that is the second excuse. 'Krishna's character was questionable' – that is the third excuse. 'Shiva was the god of the ignorant' – another excuse. People find many excuses like this, but they cannot see the kind of character film stars have who they are so crazy about. Nobody cares about all this but when it comes to chanting the name of the Lord, all kinds of questions arise. Which is why Tulsidas says that it is very easy to worship the formless god but very difficult to worship forms of god, people just don't understand it.

The culture of music

Each century has its own defining culture. The culture of the next century will be music. I tell parents that you can teach your children how to read and write later, first teach them singing. For instance, when a woman comes to know that she has conceived a child, she must immediately start learning music. Without any delay, she should learn music. When Prahlad's mother realized that she was pregnant, she started singing bhajans. As soon as the urge to eat sour-sweet mangoes arises, first of all sing bhajans of the divine. This is only possible if the mother herself has received these teachings in her childhood.

The second thing which is coming to light now due to scientific research is that through music and through the vibrations created by music, the brain can be influenced. Meaning that if you consider music as one kind of therapy, it will not be incorrect. When you sing, you create sound, you create a tune. This sound called *nada-brahma* is capable of slowly arousing kundalini. The sadhana of music is a totally different kind of sadhana. Even if you do not look upon it as sadhana and see it as only entertainment, there is no better form of entertainment than music. If you wish to walk the path of *shringar* or romance, there is nothing more powerful than music. The expression of romance, the expression of bhakti and even the expression of entertainment is best accomplished through music.

This year the bhajan which will be sung during Sita Kalyanam will be on Shiva-Parvati, because people here believe that even Sita had gone to worship Gauri before her own marriage took place. Not just any bhajan will do, only the ones decided upon by us will be sung. There are so many bhajans and stotras to Shiva-Gauri in Sanskrit. There are many bhajans to them in the Maithili language as well. Shiva from Deoghar has been invited as the chief guest for Sita Kalyanam this year. We have not invited Shiva from Kailash, he will have a lot of problem getting a visa from there and it will also be expensive for us because he will not come on foot but by aeroplane. We can bring Shiva from Deoghar by rickshaw! This time, the chief guests will be Shiva-Gauri.

In today's world, the progress in yoga, music and worship is coming from the West. Isn't it odd? In the West you will hardly find a person who does not know music. There all children are taught music from a very early age.

Social responsibility

Maharaja Agrasen was a very benevolent king. Whenever anyone approached him for alms, he used to collect one rupee from all his subjects and would buy a brick and then give it to the person. 50,000 rupees and 50,000 bricks would

be collected from 50,000 people. The person would get a house as well as some money to start a small business. This was the rule which Maharaja Agrasen followed. In today's age if our brother becomes poor, we do not know how to uplift him, how to give him a lakh of rupees. People in society will not get together and give a rupee or two, arrange for a lakh of rupees and tell him, 'Here you are, go and start some business.' Today man only thinks about himself and his own people. Today the definition of 'my people' is me, my wife and my child. When the very definition of who is mine has changed, society has also changed. This should not happen. A man is responsible for his wife and children, for sure, but he also has a social responsibility. If the house next door is on fire, how long will my house stay safe? It will also burn one day or the other. People are not taking this fact into consideration. This is a social responsibility and due. It is also the main reason why our society is fraught with poverty, illiteracy and destitution.

Does the soul retain its own personality and memories or are these lost after death? If they are forgotten, then do memories come from man's collective consciousness?

If wheat or any other seed separates from the tree or plant, what happens to its qualities? Does the potential of the plant of wheat or rice die within that seed? No, it is present but in a dormant state. This is a simple answer to your question. This subject has been extensively dealt with in Samkhya, Vedanta, Buddhist and Jain philosophy where it is explained how the soul leaves one body and how it acquires another body. Of course, there are differences in their views and explanations, but one thing is certain that when I die, I leave behind my gross body. That body is then either cremated or buried and it eventually becomes one with the five elements. Man is not just this gross body and each philosophy agrees on this point. You accept that the body also has a soul within it, it has a personality, it has a life within in it. When the body dies, the soul leaves that body.

According to Vedanta and Samkhya, what is the form of this soul? These philosophies state that in reality man has three bodies – sthula, sukshma and karana. The *sthula* or gross body dies, you have seen it, but what happens to the other two bodies? They take on a certain momentum. A vehicle is formed and the passenger changes. Then it returns to a dormant state, goes into the state of nothingness or void, just like the seed of wheat goes into a dormant state. There is a plant of wheat within the seed and one day it will grow into a plant, but right now it is not visible to you. If you grind that grain into flour you will surely bake your bread, but the plant will not be visible because the plant's potential is present only in a subtle state.

When the time is right, the sukshma and karana bodies whose potential is present in a dormant state enter into the mother's womb. There they unite with nature and a new life takes form. The soul does not die. If you read the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* carefully, this is clearly stated. You should also study the principles of reincarnation in Buddhism and Jainism. Actually, the principle of reincarnation was also present in the Christian religion of ancient Europe, but after a few centuries there was a big Christian conference in Istanbul and many important priests and theologians participated in it. There were long and detailed discussions, and it was found that according to them, the idea of reincarnation was not compatible with the principles of Christianity. A resolution was passed to the effect that reincarnation was negated and expunged from the Christian religion.

Just by passing a resolution banning the idea of reincarnation does not make it redundant. No religion can do this. Suppose all the acharyas, swamis and gurus of the Hindu faith get together and pass a similar resolution, it will not make the slightest bit of difference. People will dismiss it as a stupid idea because they know that reincarnation is real and exists. Once I was addressing a very eminent gathering in France. There must have been about five thousand people in the audience. During the question and answer session, someone

asked, 'Do you believe in reincarnation?' I asked him, 'First please answer my question. Do you believe in reincarnation?' He replied, 'No, first you answer me.' I said, 'Okay, suppose that I say I do not believe.' As soon as I said that, the entire audience got into an uproar.

People are not willing to hear anything against reincarnation. Apart from the intellectuals, who are in a small number in each country anyway, everyone else – labourers, soldiers, officers, leaders – they all believe in the principles of karma and reincarnation. The word 'karma' has entered into the domain of regular language and is used widely in Europe now. If they see someone suffering from trials and tribulations they say, 'Oh, it's his karma.' Doesn't this prove their belief in reincarnation? I have no doubt whatsoever about the principle of reincarnation nor do I have any need to prove that it is true.

I will give you another example. I was looking for a good space to establish the ashram in England. I was shown a very beautiful house in Scotland. The cost was not too high either. I returned to London and told my acquaintances, 'For fifty thousand pounds, it is a real bargain.' They all said, 'Oh, it's a haunted house!' I asked, 'Whose ghost haunts it?' They said, 'The owner of the house had murdered his wife there and it is her spirit which haunts the house.' So I said, 'But you do not believe in such things like the soul and reincarnation. At least in the Christian religion, there is no place for all this.' Despite that, they all said, 'No, no. Truly, there is a ghost in that house.' Now, if you believe in spirits and ghosts, if you believe that some houses are haunted, then this proves that you really do believe in reincarnation, you believe that there is something which lives on even after death.

I will tell you a true story which appeared in the 'Reader's Digest' about twenty to thirty years ago. A man died in some town in Russia. Preparations for his burial were in process when he came back to life again. He sat up and started speaking in Spanish. People thought that he had gone mad and admitted him into a mental asylum. The man knew that

he was not mad, that he had no mental illness. He kept saying over and over again that he was not from that country but came from somewhere else, but no one was willing to listen to him. After all, he was speaking a different language!

One day that man was reading a newspaper in the asylum. According to a report published in the paper, a man had died in Argentina and after some time, he came back to life and began to speak in Russian. Argentina is a country like India, it is not wealthy like Russia. There that man was wandering around like a madman. Anyway, it is a long story of how that Russian man was taken to that very town in Argentina, how he recognized the streets, post office and everything. When he reached his house, he saw the other man and said, 'Oh! That is me!' Immediately the souls changed bodies. The Spanish man became Spanish again and the Russian re-entered his own body too. Now how can you explain such occurrences? Only one principle can explain such things and that is the principle of reincarnation – the soul does not die with the body.

Contribution of Munger to the yoga movement

The people of Munger are very good. All through India, from the South to the North, people tried to set up ashrams in order to help people, but the way in which the ashram came up in Munger did not happen anywhere else. This ashram did not limit itself only to imparting yoga training but took things far beyond that. This has been possible only because of the support and cooperation of the people of Munger. If one does not have the emotional support from the people of the place in which you live, no institution can survive for long. Munger is a very well-known place from many perspectives, but there is a special quality in the people – they accepted me exactly the way I was. They accepted all my positive as well as limiting qualities and helped me in every possible way.

The area, on which Ganga Darshan stands today was impossible to acquire. It was someone's private property and

there were many complications, but the government ruled that the place would be used for a yoga ashram and cleared the way. The people were so helpful that they even used to bring bags of cement straight from the factory at a very good price. They helped in every manner. The village folks would come to the ashram gates and say, 'Tell Swamiji we have a lot of vegetables in our fields, send some swamis to harvest it and take it for the ashram.' We used to bring vegetables by the truckload. We never had to buy milk, the milkmen from across the river would drop off two pots of milk every day, and we had the same kind of regard for them as well. We never looked at the people of Munger as criminals.

Once there was great trouble in an area called Lakshmipur Diyara. There was a lot of violence and killing. Even before the administration could get there, we sent food and clothing by steamer. I had not even seen that place before, but I told a few of my disciples, 'Go, there is some trouble in that place. Violence and killing, getting handcuffed and going to jail is one thing but everyone has to eat, isn't it?' We sent them food to eat, made houses for them and now all those people are dedicated supporters of the ashram.

In 1993, there was a very big yoga convention in Munger, the Collector had called the citizens and said that there was going to be a big convention, make sure unruly behaviour is kept in check. Those people said, 'Sir, we do not behave like that with the ashram. Put us in charge of the security, no one will dare to try anything out of hand.' When dacoits and thieves are your friends, you are completely safe and secure. That friendship only needs one thing – love. Love is unconditional. Loving only good people, sadhus and saints is putting limits on love. Loving people who are bad, people who do wrong – this takes away the boundaries of love.

I lived very happily in Munger. There was never any trouble. That is why I say that the ashram in Munger has only been possible with the help and cooperation of the people of Munger and Bihar. Bihar has not only supported this yoga ashram, in the past Gautam Buddha, Bhagavan Mahavir,

Gandhi, Jay Prakash Narayan – all received a lot of support. If one thinks about it, most of the scholars of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy were from Bihar.

Service to mankind

I left Munger and have settled in Deoghar. Now I do not think about Munger, I think about the future. There is a saying – ‘Get up, gather your belongings and embark on your journey, all the caravanserais and rest houses of the world are your home.’ Well, you have got it wrong, my friend! This is just the railway platform where we are waiting for our train to arrive. I said to god that I want to go but he says to me that all the seats are reserved, wait for some time. I am on the waiting list. I have come here to go, I have not come here to return, oh no! Whatever work I did in Munger was not because it was my wish. I am not interested in yoga nor am I interested in Vedanta. Neither am I interested in studying nor am I interested in vidya. I have only one interest – how can I become a helper to others.

The problems faced by the world today are predominantly material problems. To say that the problems of the world are spiritual, that would be saying too much. I am not saying that there aren’t spiritual, emotional or psychological problems, but the basic problem that mankind is facing today is material. In India itself more than 50% of the population is in need of help. There are so many homes where there is nothing to cook for the evening meal. There are thousands of houses which leak in the monsoon. A man can be a sadhu or a householder, a bhakta or a worshipper, either knowledgeable or ignorant, no matter what man is, his first responsibility is helping the less fortunate. When I lived in Rishikesh, we had gathered all the lepers who used to sit by the roadside and made a colony for them. We took a little bit from here and a little bit from there. People also give me a lot; I don’t really have a problem with that.

I was told by my guru, ‘Teach yoga,’ so I taught yoga; one has to pay one’s debt to the guru. That is why the yoga school

was opened in Munger. I am telling you very frankly that I have never read any book on yoga either. Neither the *Gorakh Samhita*, nor the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. My study has been that of Vedanta which I learnt in Kailash ashram. I have studied the *Shankara Bhashyas* and all those books, but I have never taught anyone Vedanta. I feel, what is the point in teaching all this. In a home where there is nothing to eat they will say, 'What bhajan can one do on an empty stomach? Here, take back your japa mala!' 70% of India's population depends on agriculture and they are a totally deprived group.

Can a devotee stay in constant contact with god by doing kirtan and continuous remembrance? God says, "Neither do I stay in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of yogis. I am always present where devotees sing my name."

*Na ham vaasaami Vaikunthe yoginaam hridayena cha;
Madbhaktaha yatra gaayanti tatra tishthaami naarada.*

So when you sing the name of god, he is certainly with you and you are with him. Neither is he alone, nor are you. Otherwise poor god is all alone, no one knows him, they call him unknowable. Which is why god said, '*Ekoham bahusyamaha*' – I am one, let me be many. He united with prakriti, became many from one, and that is when the leela started.

If one thinks about it, even Sri Krishna was alone. When he left Vrindavan-Mathura and went to Dwarka, he became a very big figure. Even there, he experienced extreme loneliness because he was not able to meet Radha. He loved Radha very much. When he was in Vrindavan, the two of them used to meet regularly. He used to play the flute and dance, but after going to Dwarka, he became very lonely and until the very end he stayed that way.

Mother, father, husband, wife or children cannot be your internal companions. The true companionship is only possible by one who truly loves you and whom you truly love. That is why I say that Krishna was lonely. Rukmini and Satyabhama were his wives, but his closest companion and

friend was Radha. Radha and Krishna loved each other very much, but Radha was left behind and he came to settle down in Dwarka. She experienced loneliness there and so did he.

Swamiji, people say that the Christian religion is founded on the principle of sin. They say that anything which the Lord does not like is a sin. But how do they know what it is that the Lord likes or dislikes?

I should not answer these kinds of questions because it is not good for a sadhu to criticize or cast aspersions on any religion. What we sadhus need is to accept every religion along with its limitations. This is everyone's responsibility. The principle of sin in the Christian religion can be criticized on one hundred different issues, but why? I have no right to criticize a religion which is not my own. I can criticize my own faith, if I have the courage to do it. No one criticizes their own faith. Each one sees another person's daughter-in-law as bad, but no one sees any fault in their own daughters or daughters-in-law.

There are a thousand faults with our religion as well. Isn't untouchability a weakness of our religion? The terrible discrimination faced by widows, is that not a weakness of our religion? How many such weaknesses should I point out to you? Neither do they have the right to criticize our religion, nor do we have the right to criticize theirs. Why? Religion has two forms – one is eternal, the other one is according to the age or times. Taking into account the social situations, political conditions, the economic condition of the people, looking at the level of their education, the changes that take place in religion is one form. At such time we place a veil or drape a cloth over religion and that is what people hold on to. If someone grows a long beard, he is Muslim, if he has a tuft of hair then he is Hindu! If a Muslim plays the role of a Hindu in a film, he wears the sacred thread. If there is a sacred thread and tuft of hair, if the name is Rama or Narayana, he becomes a Hindu and if the name is Mohammed Rehman, he is a Muslim! How can a person become Hindu or Muslim

based on a name? The name is something given by culture, not by religion. The clothes are something given by society, not religion.

In reality, religion is only related to one thing. The basis or foundation of religion is the relationship between the individual soul and the divine. In English the name is religion. The root word in Latin is 'religare'. 'Re' means again and 'legare' means to meet or to join. Religion means to re-establish a relationship. What relationship and with whom? The divine was one. An emotion arose within him, he created the world and individual beings. After wandering through 84,000 life forms, the soul thinks 'Oh, I am lost and have gone far away from my home' and returns again, there is a reunion. That is called religion. The path which unites the individual soul with the divine is religion.

We do not consider this as the ultimate definition of religion. This is certainly the root definition of religion but it is not the final one. We have a very basic definition of religion which is called *sanatana* or eternal, the path of union between the individual soul and the divine, and one is a definition bound by time deriving the definition from conduct. Conduct means the way in which one lives and conducts life – do not lie, do not do this, do not do that, live well, what is the dharma of a woman, this is a man's dharma, this is a husband's dharma, the raja's dharma is this, the dharma of the people is that, the sadhu's dharma is something else. Here we have obligations and responsibilities. These are the changing definitions of religion. The union of the individual soul and the divine is an unchanging reality whereas these definitions of religion change according to every age and time period. Earlier girls had long hair, then they cut their hair and wore it short, did religion die because of this? No, religion did not die, it changed. Like one wears clothes according to the season and one cooks depending on how hungry one is, in the same way, the religion also changes with time. That is why I am not in favour of casting any aspersions or criticizing any religion. Anyway, I know a lot about the Christian religion.

But we want to know the definition of sin.

Only one thing is called sin. The time when the individual soul separated from the divine is sin and when it reunites that is called *moksha*.

Then what is *punya* or virtue?

Give a little money to the poor, give a piece of bread to a hungry person, water to one who is thirsty, give a blanket to someone in the winter, give a saree to a poor girl, medicine to the sick, sponsor a capable boy for higher studies – this is *punya* or virtue. Any good work done for the benefit of others is called *punya*. Tulsidas has said so and it is also written in the Puranas that there are two things which will work in Kali Yuga: chanting the name of the Lord and virtuous acts. Apart from this, nothing else will work.

You said that the Divine is one, we accept that. But there are so many gods and goddesses in the Hindu religion, in which direction should one concentrate? Sometimes Rama, sometimes Krishna, sometimes Shiva, sometimes Kali and at other times some other god.

The question which you have asked has been put to me many times. This is very difficult to explain and equally difficult to understand. Tulsidas has said that the *nirguna* path or the path of the formless is very easy, whereas the path of *saguna* or of the form is very difficult. This is not easy to understand. In the vedic dharma, the worship of many gods and goddesses is accepted. In the *Rig Veda* it is written, *Ekam sat vipraaha bahudha vadanti*. ‘*Sat*’ means that which is, that which exists. That truth is one but the learned ones call it by many names. What does it mean when one says that it is known or called by many names? Let us say that you have many books written in English. Some are on yoga, some on science, some about geography. Should one call the book on yoga English or the book on science English or should we call the book on geography English? They are all in English but even if we call them English, they are all different, not one.

In the same way, a conscious soul manifests in many forms. Like it is said in the *Kathopanishad* that *agni* or fire is one, but when it manifests it does so in different forms, so also the inner soul or spirit is one but when it manifests it can be in the form of Rama or Krishna or Devi; it manifests in crores of different forms. Some people found it in the form of Rama, recognized it as Rama, some were unable to recognize it even after seeing it. It is very difficult to recognize god. A new servant comes to work in your house, are you able to tell whether or not he is a thief or a dacoit? You are unable to recognize a thief or a dacoit, which is an ordinary thing, then how will you be able to recognize god? Someone comes to your door, says he is hungry, you question whether he is really hungry or not. When you are not able to even recognize this, will you be able to recognize god? It is not so easy to know god.

The second thing is that god has manifested in the form of Rama or Krishna and there are many other forms in which he has come which we have forgotten today. Rama and Krishna are alive today because of the communities; so many other communities have died away. Whenever god has taken a specific and special form, it has only been for those like yourself who want to know god, who want to focus their minds on god, who want to immerse their souls in god, who wish to merge their identity and existence with that of god. How to do it? The formless has no identity, it has no form, no quality, but the divine which has taken form is beautiful, charming, his eyes are red, his body has a dark hue, he has broad shoulders, his arms reach his knees, he speaks sweetly, whenever his glance falls on someone; it is as if a heavenly shower of blossoms falls all around. When you see an attractive man, woman or child or you look at a beautiful flower, saree or jewellery, you like it, don't you? Your mind loses itself in that. Now if all these objects lose their form, then what will happen?

The very first form of god is this entire creation. It is such a huge form that you are not able to concentrate on it. That

is why god gave man a form to concentrate upon which was compatible with man's mind and mental capacities. That form was of the avatars. Generally, it is said that god incarnates in order to defeat evil, to uplift the good and in order to establish dharma, but I believe that god incarnates in order to support and help devotees. There is an instance in the *Ramacharitamanas* when Lord Shiva and Parvati get married and one day Parvati asks Shiva, "Lord! In my last incarnation, my intellect was befuddled, I was unable to recognize Sri Rama. A doubt arose in my mind about how this man who is weeping in desolation because he was separated from his wife can really be a god. God is formless, beyond qualities, beyond birth and death, this is what I had heard, so where did this god who is crying come from? At that time, there was a doubt in my mind and I also tested him but now there is not a shred of doubt in my mind. Now all I want is to listen to his story." Then Shiva said to Girija:

*Pooncchehu Raghupati katha prasangaa;
Sakala loka jag paavani Ganga.*

Listening to the story of Sri Rama and all the different episodes are what will purify the whole world. The foundation of the story is god's leela. If Sri Rama was never born, then how would we had have his stories? People are getting pure by listening to his stories. That is why Lord Shiva says, "Girija! You are asking about instances from the life of Sri Rama, they are like the holy river Ganga which purifies the whole world. Come, let me tell you his story!" How beautiful is this worship of the divine form! You can tell the story for a thousand years. If your mind is not able to engage itself on his holy feet, then focus on his navel or let it rest upon his broad shoulders. If it cannot do that, then focus on his forehead. Your mind will definitely settle upon one or the other aspect of god. Don't see god as god, take him to be your friend, how does it matter? After all, one has to remember god, isn't it so? Remember him as your friend, remember him with love, otherwise you can also remember him by brandishing a stick

at him! Baidyanath was an Adivasi, he used to beat god with a stick. This Baidyanath temple in Deoghar is a very ancient temple of the Adivasis.

The last point – one can certainly have discussions about god, but one should not doubt because there is no solution to this doubt of yours. You tell me – is your father truly your father? Can you furnish any concrete proof of this? When you cannot give definitive proof of fatherhood, when we cannot even give proof of something so simple, how can you ever hope to be able to prove that god exists? No, he is beyond intellect. Many things are based upon trust and faith. Those of you who have read the *Ramacharitamanas* will have noticed that the basis of devotion to god is faith and trust. Trust and faith are the A-B-C of god's worship.

*Bhavanishankarauvande shraddhavishwaasa roopinau;
Yabhyaam vinaa napashyanti siddhahasvaantastham eeshwaram.*

It is not possible to behold the god who lives within you if there is no faith and trust. That god, who is in your pocket but cannot be seen unless you have trust and faith is not visible to those who have high accomplishments either, then how will you see the one who dwells high in the heavens above? He is very, very far. Which is why Tulsidas says right at the outset – *Vande bodhamaam nityam gurum shankara roopinam*. There the guru is absolutely essential. Guru is the one who is the connection between the devotee and the divine.

Satsang 16

20 November 1997

Those people who call themselves civilized should not commit such injustices against women, they should not make so many rules, and the role of women should not be so limited. In a civilized society, to define the boundaries of a woman's role by saying, 'This is okay, this is not' is wrong. It has been proved before one's very eyes. Was it possible in earlier times to even imagine that any woman would achieve such heights of proficiency in space science? Kalpana Chawla going into space is certainly no small feat. This is a great attainment for womankind and also a great challenge for our male-dominated society.

Our civilization is not that of the Middle East, but for a very long period of time it has been influenced by that culture and it still is. It is a very dry civilization and culture. There purdah has to be used for protection against the sand and the sun which is hot like burning embers. The body turns black. The sand comes flying at you, that is why they wear the veil or purdah. What is the need for that in India?

They don't have villages like we have here. One house is here, the other one is beyond Rikhia market and the third house is even further away. There is a distance of three or four miles between houses. They have to walk for five or six miles to get water. I am talking about the time when I had gone there, of course by now there must be some changes. Many villages together share one well from where people draw their water; it is so difficult. We were influenced by that culture and we are still carrying that burden on our shoulders. In essence, our culture is not like that of the Middle East but is more along

the lines of western culture. We will have to change our way of thinking and also change many other things about ourselves. The role of women will certainly have to be changed. Without that, our house will not run properly.

What you call Hindu dharma is basically vedic dharma. All our social conduct and thought, rites and rituals are based on the Vedas. In the Bible and Koran only one thing is said, but in the Vedas they don't say only one thing. Just on the subject of marriage, we have so many different opinions. What is the description of a wife? Who is called a son? If a child is born of a relationship between a man and a woman, is that child called a rightful son and heir? The Vedas describe twenty-four different kinds of sons and then their legal standing is also described. From *aurasputra*, legitimate sons, to illegitimate sons – twenty-four kinds of sons have their legal rights, they have different social identities.

The Vedas have had a very independent thought system. They have explained what is called marriage. There should be a definite description of marriage. If a man and woman live together, is that marriage? What is the description of marriage and who has the right to make decisions about it? Will the man and woman decide or will the parents decide or will society decide?

The parents say, 'We will decide. Who are you to make this decision?' Somebody like me will say, 'I will make the decision. I am the one who is getting married, not you.' The parents say, 'We are experienced.' I will say, 'It is my need.' Both of them are right, but they both have to come to some understanding between themselves. Society says, 'No, marriage is not just an individual's choice where you get married because you have decided to marry someone according to your own choice. Where is society's role in this?' In the Vedas, all these different situations, perspectives and history have been narrated in the form of stories. Society says that marriage is not a matter of individual choice or parents' wish; it is something to do with society. That is why society is also involved in this issue. When a marriage takes place in

accordance with the decisions made by society, the individual and the parents, it is called a vedic marriage. Brahma, Gandharva, Aasur and Paishach – they are all different forms of marriage? Bhagavan Krishna eloped with Rukmini, what would you call that? Rakshasa marriage, right?

Look at the episode of the marriage between Sita and Sri Rama, how beautiful it is! Sri Rama liked Sita, Sita also liked Sri Rama, Janaka and Sunaina also liked Sri Rama, and the most important of all, the people of Mithila also liked Sri Rama. There are three elements here: parents, the bride and groom and society. The Vedas also accept swayamvara as well as kidnapping! It is not as if a girl who has been abducted is not accepted by society and ostracized – now that you have brought someone, keep her well; after all, it is the question of a girl's life.

In our vedic dharma, wife and husband are considered as witnesses meaning that any religious activity or ritual cannot be conducted without the presence of the husband and wife. Which means that the husband and wife are equals but you have limited the role of women due to some historical reasons. It is not necessary to recount those historical reasons, but now those reasons are no longer present or relevant in our society. Given the changed circumstances, it is wrong to keep women locked up in the home and severely restrict their role thus.

I got to hear only a few days ago that Kalpana Chawla is going into space. I said that in this age, it is very necessary. Today it is possible for women to achieve and attain a lot. In order to make society strong, to have strong families, it is absolutely essential for women to be strong, there has to be access to education. Even at a physical level, women are not weak. You have seen the sportswomen of China and Russia. What feats they perform in the Olympic games! Even in the Gulf war, there were women soldiers. We also have women pilots, they are even enrolling for commando training. In countries like America, women are part of the police force, the army, every field. There is nothing that they cannot

do. Simply keeping women in the house to cook meals and produce children is wrong!

It would be good if the rearing of children is done by someone who is a professional; someone who has knowledge about children's illnesses, their psychology, the diet which they should follow. In countries like England they have baby-sitters. These baby-sitters have to get a license. The crèches, where parents leave their children when they go to work, also have licenses. The children go there in the morning, the girls have to bathe them, make sure that they don't have any problems with their teeth, play different games with them, teach them the alphabet. Like this they learn many things and in the evening, the children go home. This arrangement means that a woman's precious life is not simply wasted by being at home with the children.

In our population of 90 crores, what is the contribution of about 45% of the people to society? How much are they able to earn for their families? If the woman is educated and has a job, she can earn at least three thousand rupees out of which she will pay a thousand rupees and engage a maidservant to look after the house and the children. This is what they do in foreign countries. It is something the village folk here must think about. It is already happening in the cities because they experience the pressure, but in the villages there is no such compulsion yet.

The influence of life in space on consciousness

Life in space is a very unusual one. There is absolutely no weight there. The brain and heart of a person is influenced when they live in a place without any gravity. The people who go to such places, their consciousness is different from the average person. First of all, they live in zero-gravity, the second thing is that they live alone for many months and years. There is no sound of vehicles, no wife, no children, no bank, no tax, no shops, no house, nothing. Their meals are in the form of just tablets. They can't say that let's make poha today or how about some pulao or halwa? Every day they

have to consume the same diet. They have to live according to strict rules.

The experience of walking on earth and the experience of flying in the air are completely different. When we go up to twenty thousand feet while in an airplane, it is a totally different experience, isn't it? After that, when we land there is jetlag for many days. You have to sleep for one or two days. So there is definitely an influence on the consciousness. Whoever has been up in space has only one thing to say, 'It's a very unique show!' Whoever has created this, that Sri Rama is in me and I am in Sri Rama!

*Surya som mein, anil vyom mein,
Ghanghorghata dharni mein.
Tum sab mein aur sabhi desh mein,
Chhayee natnaagar ho tum!*

The Sun is in the moon, fire is in air, heavy clouds are in the earth. You are in everything and in every place, You are present everywhere!

The presence of the divine is experienced very distinctly there. I have read many books written by space travellers, they all have had the same experience. It is not as if god lives only in the heavens above. God lives here as well, but here it is not so easy to have the experience of god's presence. Why? Like now I am speaking, you all are listening. If a band starts playing loud music, what will happen? I am still speaking but you will not be able to hear anything because the music is louder. In our world there is so much loud music that even the thought of god does not come to us. The voice of god within us, that silent voice, which is his music, we are unable to hear at all because the senses are all playing very loud music. Desire, love, attraction, repulsion, longing, anger, worry, fear – there are so many things within our minds. We worry, we feel afraid, we experience love, there is attachment, our heart gets involved and tied up with someone, we fight with another, we get angry, doesn't it happen? This is the

loud music which the band is playing. Until this stops, you will not be able to hear the sound of the divine, whereas actually god is here as well.

If you go up into space, will you see god in front of you? No, god is also here and also there. Yesterday the shuttle went into space, where there is a void, where there is no gravity. Our weight here is 70 kilograms but there we become weightless. When you go so high that even your weight ceases to exist, then the first experience is that of weightlessness of the body. After working very hard when you rest, doesn't the experience feel different when you lie down on your bed? You feel a lightness. In the same way, when you go into space you experience weightlessness, there is no sense of body weight. This is the first change that happens there.

The second one is that everything has to be done in a very carefully calibrated manner. Eating on time, sleeping on time, exercise routine to be followed on time, whatever work one is assigned, it has to be done on time. The question of carelessness does not arise at all. Cigarettes, alcohol, scotch, women – everything drops away. Brahmacharya has to be maintained. You can't gamble and play cards. Is this not a yogi's life? The people who live such a life, their mental consciousness will definitely be very high. This fact will have to be accepted that the girl who went into space yesterday, she is not an ordinary girl! She is like the village girls here, the only difference is that she studied in a school. Her destiny was such that at the age of eighteen, she left this country and went to America. She always had this idea in her mind to go into space one day. There were five thousand hopeful people who wanted to go into space and she was chosen.

The people for whom it is natural to be away from home and hearth, from worldly ties, from love and dislike, such people are not ordinary folks. The average person wants to live with family, with love and affection, in safety and security. Offspring, wealth, the music between man and woman – they want all that. Then there are some people who say that this is all fine but we want to become something else. For this

they certainly have to sacrifice something. If they do not give up anything, they cannot become anything either. After all, Kalpana must have sacrificed something for sure. She must have sacrificed her married life. A decision would have to be taken whether I should get married or do this. She gave priority to this and that is what she became. In order to gain something, something has to be given up – this is nature's steadfast rule.

Scientists have done a lot of surprising and incredible work; they have discovered many amazing principles. They have proven those principles to us in no uncertain terms. Someone is singing and dancing in Delhi and you are sitting in your house in Deoghar and watching it. They came up with this principle and technology, to transfer the image of anything into waves, send it into space and then transmit that image back to Earth so that it can be seen. Meaning that not only sound, even images can be transmitted like this.

Nowadays pictures are taken from satellites, they can tell where water can be found on earth, where there is oil, all this can be found out through the interpretation of these pictures. Recently they have found out that there was a river which flowed in Rajasthan. In the *Rig Veda* there is the word 'Saraswati.' The *Sama Veda* was sung on the banks of this river, but no Saraswati river was found! Through these satellite images it has been found that this river flowed in Rajasthan. They have identified her old route. That was the Saraswati river, later she changed course and flowed towards Punjab, Sind and Beas.

In ancient times when people used to communicate telepathically, how were they able to do that?

The science we know about from ancient times indicates that they used to communicate by using consciousness which is called yoga. In Kali Yuga it is not possible. To think that man will be able to use his mind in order to undertake such activities is impossible, because in Kali Yuga man's heart has become corrupted. If in Kali Yuga man's mind becomes as capable as

your machines and other instruments are, then there will be no time left to stay alive because man's mind is very impure. No one can say with any truth that their mind is pure. Everyone's mind is full of violence, anger, desire and worry, one gets angry, attachments have grown very powerful too.

Now if such a man's mind also becomes very powerful, what will he do? He will destroy others for sure. Therefore, nature has deprived man of this power. In ancient times, people used to cast a curse upon others, nowadays that is not possible. Today a person who has the capability to do this cannot be found anywhere.

Man has become only materialistic and selfish. Today a person's family is limited to his wife and children, apart from them he does not care for anyone else. The situation is such that people can perform evil or bad acts even for their family; this has become a characteristic of man today. If your family expands to include the whole village, the entire panchayat, the whole of society, they all become your responsibility, then that power can come back. Only a selfless person can attain such power. Otherwise, in Kali Yuga yajnas, penance and such things are forbidden, they cannot be performed. If a person performs penance, his blood will dry up, the heart will stop working, he will become incapacitated, he might even die. We have heard about the many arduous penances and austerities which the rishis and munis used to perform. Try and do it today, you won't even last fifteen days.

Nature has created such a rule where if a man is true then the basis of his power and strength is something different, and when man becomes crooked, then the foundation of his power is different. Today there are so many laws, in earlier times were there such laws? Why not? Because there was no need for them. In a society where there is no need for laws, no laws are required to be made. Today there are rules and laws for everything in order to catch crooks and criminals. This is the kind of age we live in today.

Yes, there are the occasional pious souls who are born, on whom god confers a few special powers. You must have heard

about Narada, do you see anyone like that today? He used to travel all over the world without any airplanes. You certainly have heard about Hanuman as well. These stories are from an age in which men were not like they are today. Today's people have very limited and selfish interests and their power and longevity have also reduced. Today people can begin to suffer from diabetes at the young age of twenty-five or thirty. This is Kali Yuga. Earlier people learned about things just from their minds, today one needs to use a telephone. The things which were done through the mind earlier are now being done with the aid of machines.

One needs a microscope in order to see tiny things, a telescope to see things which are far away and different machines in order to read waves and rays, in the same way, to perceive the greatness of god one needs divine vision. Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, "Bhagavan! You have made many grand statements like 'amongst rivers, I am the Ganga; among mountains, I am Himalaya; I am the Peepul among trees, among months, I am Margashirsha; amongst the Vedas, I am the *Sama Veda*', I am this and I am that. You have described your greatness, now show them to me." Sri Krishna said, "You will not be able to see with these eyes. So, '*Dīvyam dadaami chakshuhū*' – I will confer divine vision upon you, now look at my yoga and my splendour." Then Sri Krishna revealed his *Viratroopa*, his immense and awe-inspiring form. This divine form was not seen through the eyes but from his spiritual consciousness, inner vision, divine vision. There was a flowering of consciousness within Arjuna. Sanjay also saw it because he had received the gift of divine vision from Vedavyasa.

In one way, the *Bhagavad Gita* is a book in Braille for the blind because there were two blind persons in it: one was Dhritirashtra, who was blind from birth which was why Sanjay was narrating the events to him, and Arjun was blinded by his attachment, he was unable to see where his duty lay and that was when Sri Krishna told him what it was.

Was this divine vision attainable by ordinary people as well?

No, this divine vision was only attained by god's grace, through the will of god, not otherwise. Divine vision is also attained through the medium of the guru but it is conferred by god himself. Anyone who had this divine vision, was allowed to experience Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Rama, Devi, Krishna and all of divinity and those who did not were able to have the vision through their feelings.

Those of us who believe in Bhagavan or Rama or Devi or Hanuman, do not have divine vision. It is the perception of our emotions and feelings, and this kind of a vision is called bhakti. Through our feelings we are able to see, we are looking at this through our emotions and this means that the basis of this sight or vision is bhakti. They see because of bhakti. That is why the foundation in this age is bhakti. God will never confer divine vision because where do you have the time for it, the search or the longing for it? That is why this is the age of emotional vision.

Another question arises from this point that while Meghnad had darshan of Brahma and spoke with him, Ravana had also performed a lot of penance and austerities. Despite that, why was he not able to recognize Rama? He had darshan of Brahma because he had divine vision, but then why was he not able to recognize Rama?

No, those people did not have divine vision. Whatever is said about Ravana, it is said with a critical and offensive tone. Ravana is not seen in the light which recognizes that he was a scholar, he belonged to a very respected and high family or clan, he was the leader of a vast empire, he was well-versed in all the Vedas or that he was a great tapasvi, ascetic and a devotee of Shiva. After all, what were his drawbacks? Just one – whenever he set his eyes upon any woman, he had to possess her. In his society this was not considered as a negative quality. He abducted Sita, and the society which he ruled over did not consider this as a bad act. The law amongst the race of the Rakshasas was that if a woman who was abducted accepted

her condition, it was okay. If she did not accept it then it was considered wrong. Just based on this point alone, he lost respect in his society. This is what Vibhishana objected to as well. Malyavant and Kumbhakarna also said the same thing. Many others also would have tried to reason with Ravana, but he was adamant and did not accept what they said.

So the question remains that despite him being such a great scholar and so many people trying to make him understand, he was unable to recognize Sri Rama?

No, you can't say that he did not recognize Sri Rama. Of course he knew. I will speak a little at length to explain this. In order to be able to experience god, there has to be an intense and deep strength in emotions. The better a telescope is, the better focus it has. In the same way, even the emotions have to be sharp and focused. Now which are these strong emotions?

*Kamihi naaripiyaari jimi, lobhihi priyajimi daam,
Timi Raghunatha nirantara, priya lagahu mohi Rama.*

In the same way that a lustful man loves women and the greedy man loves wealth; in the very same way, Rama is always dear to me.

Which is the third emotion that is equally strong? Hatred, extreme enmity. When people are in the grip of anger they say things like, 'I will kill that person, I will destroy their whole family and clan'. This is the emotion of enmity. Ravana must have thought, 'Well, bhakti is not an emotion for me. Why is that so? I am not willing to accept Rama as god. My intellect is not able to understand that the divine can be born from a mother's womb! So bhakti bhava towards Sri Rama is simply not possible. Then which other bhava remains?'

Without intensity of emotion, it is not possible to reach close to god. One cannot enter a cinema hall or an airplane without a ticket. In the same way, the ticket to come close to god is intense emotion. This intense emotion can either be one of bhakti or even enmity. Ravana discovered that the

emotion of enmity was easier for him. All the episodes that had taken place, in which Khar, Dushan, Taraka, Subahu and other demons were killed, became the means for him. He said, 'I will take revenge.' This is how the feeling of hatred and enmity became very strong within Ravana.

All the rules that apply to this feeling of enmity have to be followed. At that time one cannot think that Sri Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu, he is *parampurusha*, *shudhparatpar Brahma*. No, Sri Rama was an exiled person who had a beautiful wife, so I will abduct her and take her away.

Whatever Ravana did was consistent with that feeling. One cannot have feelings of enmity on one side and sing the praises of Sri Rama on the other. Enmity means enmity, he is my enemy. Any virtue or good quality which he might possess does not impress me, I don't appreciate it. Sri Rama was thrown out of his house by his own father and was wandering from pillar to post, this is what Ravana used to say about Rama. When the feeling of enmity is present, it has to be played out to the hilt. Only then will the intensity of emotion build up, be experienced and expressed.

That is why he did not listen to anyone's advice?

When one is in the sway of intense emotion, it is not possible to pay attention and listen to what anyone says. Whether it is an emotion of brotherhood or parental love or any emotion, at such times one should not even listen to anyone. Do you understand what I am saying?

But he must have had some divine experience at the time of his death?

This is something the storytellers say that at the time of his death he said 'Rama.' Whether he really said so or not, how can we tell? I will explain by giving you an example. These bumblebees which you see, they do not have male or female gender. They have only one gender. Do you know how they reproduce? They make a nest with mud, then they go into the grass. From there they catch any small green insect with

their teeth and put it into the mud nest. This insect is not the offspring, it is just some other insect. Three or four insects are put into the nest and then the entrance is sealed off. I sit here in the months of August and September and watch all this. The bumblebee returns, opens the entrance and enters the nest. For about fifteen minutes, there is a humming sound and then again it emerges and seals the entrance. After a few days, a *tataiyya*, a bumblebee emerges fully formed from that nest.

Anything which is constantly remembered by any life form, something which is constantly put into its mind, it takes on the form of that creature. In Vedanta this is called *keet-bhramar-nyaya* – when a human being becomes like the divine through constant remembrance of the divine form. The example which is given is the behaviour that the bumblebee adopts with the insect.

Now we come to your question. Since the day that Ravana abducted Sita, he became very attached to her. Sita spurned him and did not accept his advances, the whole world knows that story. Later, when Rama crossed the waters and reached the other side, Ravana's mind was diverted from Sita and became fixed on Sri Rama. As long as his mind was fixed on Sita, it was driven by desire, but when it became fixed on Sri Rama, it was not driven by desire but by fear. Day by day the fear increased to such a point where for twenty-four hours, all Ravana could think of was Sri Rama. Someone who is unable to think of anything else apart from Sri Rama, he will eventually become like Sri Rama.

When the individual soul is fully focused day and night on any form of the divine and does not think of anything or anyone else apart from that divine form, when even the sense of oneself has totally dissolved, then he becomes fused with that form. If you put a stone into water, the stone will remain a stone, but if you put salt into water, it will dissolve and become one with the water. Like the humming of the bumblebee makes the insect into a bumblebee too, in the same way, when Ravana was totally fraught with fear, all he could think of was Sri Rama and even a person like Ravana became divine.

The manner in which you remember the divine depends entirely on you. You can think of god as your lover, your child, your husband, your lord or even your enemy and remember him with that feeling. That is exactly what Mirabai did, you know the stories. Mirabai saw the statue which she had received as a little girl as her husband. Whether it was a statue of Shyama or Giridhara-Gopala, it became her husband. That was what the statue became for her that was how she felt about it – the way a woman feels about her husband. That is called *tadroopata* – total identification. This is a very great thing. The traders' minds are focused on money for twenty-four hours. A cobbler only has eyes for shoes. Each person's desire is fixed on something or the other. In some it is women, for others it is wealth, yet others are obsessed with dogs, someone is lost in maya and another is totally fixed on the divine.

The second thing is that, you forget that Sri Rama and Ravana were both film actors. God had created a very big script for Sri Rama and Ravana. Why? Devotees thought in their minds that they wished to attain god, but where to find him? Now he has no father, no name, no form, height or width, fair or dark, he has no attributes whatsoever. One hears that god does not even take birth, he does not die and cannot be seen with these eyes. Then tell me, whom should one hope to attain or even search for? Nor do I know your name, neither have I ever seen you, now what can I do? Then the devotees said, 'please have some mercy and grace upon us, O God, so that we can attain you'. That was when the divine incarnated.

God did not incarnate to kill Ravana but to offer a foundation and support for his devotees. If god had not incarnated as Sri Rama or Krishna, whom would you worship with closed eyes for half an hour? God did not take this identifiable form in order to kill Ravana, for the upliftment of dharma and the destruction of evil that was just an excuse. The true intent and purpose for God to incarnate is for devotees, for bhaktas.

Make sure you remember this well, if the divine did not incarnate in this identifiable form, all devotees would just remain demons. By repeating *Aham Brahmasmi* endlessly, they would begin to believe that they themselves were Brahma. A mere man who eats dal-roti, urinates and defecates, kills others, robs and cheats – such a creature will call himself god! How did you become divine Brahma? Brahma is the one who created the sun, moon, stars, this whole incredible creation. You create something like this, then we will consider you as god.

God has intentionally incarnated and played this entire *leela* or game. Sri Rama killed Ravana, this is their *leela*. When you make films, why do you make them? In order to show people what is true and what is untrue, what is sin and virtue. Every film sets an example, an ideal, has a message, isn't it? Just like every film has a purpose behind it, in the same way the entire *Ramayana* has one purpose. The war between Sri Rama and Ravana is just one episode which is called *leela*. *Ramleela* is a story in which Sri Rama was there, Sita was there. Ravana abducted her and so Rama killed him. These are mere episodes and anecdotes but the real story is about the way in which Sri Rama lived his entire life – what kind of clothes he wore, how he wore his hair, how his nose looked, how his eyes were, how tall he was, what was his complexion, how did he speak, every time he strung his bow and drew the arrow, what was the colour of his eyes at that time? This is what devotees concentrate upon and this is how they achieve yoga or union.

Surdas was blind. First his gaze was very bad, he only used to look lustfully at women. Frustrated and fed up with that, he tore out his eyes. He said, 'Neither will I have eyes nor will I think about women.' Despite being blind, he could see all Sri Krishna's *leelas* as if he was watching a film. How you people watch TV: Yashoda is gently rocking Krishna's cradle or he is going to graze the cattle in the forests or he is liberating Putana, just in the very same way, Surdas could see everything. If Sri Krishna had not performed all these *leelas*, how could

Surdas have seen all this? And not just Surdas; today even we are able to see all this. Whenever you hear or sing those songs, don't those images come alive before you? Even if they are not crystal clear, you do see something, don't you?

If Sri Krishna had not taken birth and played all these leelas, what songs could Surdas have written? You are eternal, immortal, indestructible, unreachable, undistinguishable – all such qualities are recounted to describe god. There is no doubt about the fact that god is without form, is formless; this is a fact. There is no dispute, but the divine which is formless is beyond our reach. That formless being can look at us if it so wishes but that we will be able to see him at some time is what I cannot accept. It is impossible. It is impossible from a theoretical as well as practical perspective. Think about it, an ant sets off to kiss the moon, it is impossible?

That is why what you are saying about god, 'This is a fight between Sri Rama and Ravana, this happened, that happened' is all very well. One should hear it, one should recount it, but at the same time you must remember that god incarnated for us, so that we may focus and concentrate upon those leelas which we like. If you like the image of Sri Rama holding his bow, think about that, meditate upon that. If you like the sight of Sri Rama standing with Sita by his side, do dhyana upon that. You like the sight of Sri Rama seated in his royal durbar, fine, think about that. If you like to visualize Sri Rama in his regal attire, wonderful, think about that. If you prefer the image of Sri Rama as an ascetic, wandering in the forests, meditate on that. Sri Rama's feet are being washed by the boatman, if you like that image, meditate on that. God showed his form to devotees and took various incarnations in order to free man from maya, so that by thinking about all the leelas, your mind is set right. The real thing is about setting the mind right. This mind is not going to attain that through the formless – that is for sure.

Satsang 17

21 November 1997

Kashmir is the land of the Sufis. People have lived there in peace for centuries. Now it has become a political issue but the Muslims of Kashmir are not like other Muslims nor are the Hindus from there like other Hindus living elsewhere. Sufi philosophy, Shaivism and tantra – these three are beautifully blended into the culture of Kashmir. The goats which are sacrificed here in Deoghar are not part of the authentic higher tantric practices; this is the tantra of the ignorant. Alcohol is also consumed, goats are sacrificed, the skull of a corpse is procured and people say that they are tantrics; this is just a way to fool people. The tantra and Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir is of a very high quality.

The cult of Shiva flourished in two places, one in Kashmir and the other in South India. The Shaivite community has had a very powerful influence in South India. Many Shaivite saints were born there. We look upon a community in the form of a philosophy. It is not necessary that you have to be a Shaivite to study the principles of Shaivism. You can be a Christian or a Muslim, you can study the principles of Shaivism because it is a philosophy. What is the basis or foundation of a philosophy? What is not visible, the invisible element, what is that? The visible form of the divine can be seen by all – creation is visible, all living creatures can be seen, but the form of the divine which is beyond the five elements, which is his real true self, how does it look? Is it one or many? The scriptures of philosophy study and reflect upon these kind of questions.

The ultimate element, which is not born, has never taken birth and that is why it is indestructible. It is *akarta*, the non-doer. Akarta means one who does not perform any action. This is the basic principle of the philosophy. Now the question arises that if the Paramatma is a non-doer, then who does all this? By whose action has creation taken place? Who is responsible for prarabdha and purushartha? Who creates the ties of joy and sorrow? Well, that is what the debate is about. If one accepts that Paramatma is the doer, then the question arises that why does he do it? This topic has been reflected upon at great length in the texts of this philosophy.

One sees three things in Shaivite philosophy – the divine, the individual soul and the world. The divine is Shiva, the individual soul is me or you and the world refers to the entire creation. These three things which exist, where is their source? You can see the tree; it has two or four hundred branches but where are its roots? The root is underneath from where the branches have sprouted. This is what people reflected upon, but in the end no solution was found. Some said this is the play of Purusha and Prakriti, some said it is Brahma and Maya. Many questions arose from that too. If the divine created the world using the support of Prakriti, then who created Prakriti? In reply to this the philosophers say, ‘No, Prakriti is a form of the divine.’

When the philosophers kept on reflecting upon things like this and finding answers to the questions, each answer in turn produced more questions. Whichever answers were given by the philosophers, scholars, rishis and munis, new questions arose from those answers. Eventually they got tired and said, ‘Okay, there is no end to this. The divine is unknowable.’ How can one argue and debate about something which is unknowable? When it has been accepted that the divine is not a subject for knowledge, then why argue about knowledge? Then they adopted the path of worship.

The path of worship means bhakti. The bhakti cult started in South India, the Sufis also adopted this path. Bhakti means

stop questioning, ‘What is god, who is god, how is god, where is god, why is god?’ in whichever way you understand or see the divine, worship that. If you see god as having a form, then worship that form; if you wish to see the divine in the form of the guru, then worship the guru. Meaning that in whichever way that God is seen or understood by you, worship that. What you cannot see or understand, forget about it. This is all there is to bhakti!

There were many Sufis among the Muslims of Kashmir. Amongst them there was a very great rishi, his name was Nand Rishi. He was a Muslim, many strange stories are told about his birth. He was born in a very poor family, but he was very highly regarded by the people there. Sufi saints were worshiped by both Hindus and Muslims alike. This fight between religions has been created by politics and politicians. In reality, there is no fight at all. If the politicians and politics were to go away, this fight will get over, in the same way that the fights between Shaivites and Vaishnavites are over or Vaishnavites and the followers of Shakti or the Shaktas.

Now look, there is such a great difference between the Vaishnava and Shakta communities. Vaishnavas do not eat onions and garlic and Shakta poojas cannot be performed without meat and alcohol. Still both are present in the same temple, both are worshipped together. Isn’t that so? Despite great differences, the deities of both communities are installed in the same temples and are worshipped together.

In the same way, if one compares the Hindu and Muslim religions, there is not much difference between them, neither in the rituals nor in the beliefs or thoughts. They say: *La illah il Allah*, meaning that there is nothing other than god, and Hindus say: *Eko Brahma dwitiyo nasti*, meaning there is only one god, there is no other. They give a lot of importance to devotion and prayer, so do we. They call it *ibadat*, we call it *aradhana*. There are no religious or philosophical differences at all. Whatever differences there are, they exist only due to politics, nothing else.

Why and how did these differences come about?

Look here, all politicians need supporters and people to follow them. In those days there was a need to fight wars, today there is a need for an electorate. In those days whoever had more supporters, victory would be theirs. Who are the people who will support you in your fight? Those whom you are able to fool and win over. The Muslims did that to other Muslims, Hindus did it to Hindus, the Brahmins to Brahmins and the same was done by kshatriyas to other kshatriyas too. They created their parties or groups on the basis of caste, language and religion. Earlier fights were fought on the basis of such groups and today the war is waged in ballot boxes. The fights that take place because of politics have been going on for ages.

Now it is happening between Hindus and Muslims, earlier it was between Shaivaites and Vaishnavaites, between Hindus and Jains, Hindus and Buddhists. If the Puranas are read correctly, you will find that terrible wars were fought, massacres and killings took place, temples were destroyed. The population migrated to different places on a large scale. People used to flee from one place to another. When the Shaivaites ruled, they got rid of the Vaishnavaites. When the Vaishnavites came to power, they chased the Shaivites away. When the Buddhists came, they drove Narayana away, when the Jains came, they removed Rama. This has always happened. We don't say much because there is already so much fighting, why add fuel to the fire? But history has been a witness to this. Let's forget about ancient history, this story is only about three or four hundred years old when Appaiyya Dikshita was a very learned Shaivaite scholar in South India. When he wished to have darshan at the Tirupati temple, he was not allowed to enter. He was a Shaivite and was denied entry. Now this is just politics.

We have nothing to do with politics, we discuss philosophy. I am not talking about debating or arguing, but I am attempting to show the similarities between different philosophies and beliefs. Whether it is vedic philosophy or Islam, there is no particular difference between them. Yes,

one fact is undeniable that the depth of reflection, ideas, thoughts and views about the divine which has been done by the scholars of vedic philosophy has not been undertaken in Islam or Christianity. They have accepted whatever was written in their scriptures. But we have not done that. Rather we have said, 'Let us first decide whether there is a god.'

Idealism and Realism

There is a difference in idealism and realism. It is necessary to have a balance between the two in life. If you are running an organization or a movement, sometimes it is required to make a show of getting angry in order to get some work done. One should not get angry – this is ideal but in practical day-to-day life sometimes anger is required. This is the same problem which Arjuna faced during the Mahabharata war. On the battlefield he saw his cousins and uncles, his gurus and teachers who he had to fight and kill. Of course, the ideal is that one should not be violent, one should respect and honour one's gurus and elders, Instead of war there should be peace. If one thinks about that situation now, one will see that war was inevitable. Arjuna was not able to understand this, his doubts remained and in order to dispel his doubts, Sri Krishna imparted the teaching of *nishkama karma yoga*, karma yoga which does not seek any reward.

What is the meaning of this *nishkama karma yoga*? Performing karma is your duty and your right but the fruits of that karma or action, its results, is not something you should be concerned with. You can certainly sow the seeds of a tree, but for a tree to grow from that seed or bear fruit does not depend upon you. That is why you should keep on doing your duty without bothering about the fruits. When I was attached to an institution, on many occasions I had to take different kinds of decisions. It was a big institution and there were many kinds of people. I had to maintain the discipline and if people did not fulfil their responsibilities, I had to ask them to leave. After all, I had my responsibility towards the institution, I was answerable to the Income Tax

and other government departments. Which is why I had to interact with people as the administrator of an institution and not as a sannyasin.

When Ganga Darshan was being built, there was a man living there who had taken unlawful possession of the land for many years. At that time should I have said, 'I am a sannyasin, why should I have him evicted?' No, I was the head of an institution and it was my duty to have him evicted. Despite that, we did not use force in order to do this. We lodged a case in the court and ultimately he had to leave.

There are many occasions in life when doubts and questions arise about dharma and duty. In my position as the head of an institution, I had to do whatever was appropriate and in keeping with the law. At that time, I was not fulfilling the role of a sannyasin because the dharma of a sannyasin is different. After all, isn't it the creed of a sannyasin to even give one's trousers to the person who is snatching your shirt? If someone slaps you, show him the other cheek too. If someone is stealing your property, quietly let it happen. Sacrifice and non-attachment – this is the dharma of a sannyasin, but when you are performing the role of the head of an institution, then you have to forget your identity as a sannyasin.

This is what Sri Krishna said to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'You are speaking like a learned philosopher but the reality is quite another matter. At that time, you are neither a philosopher, nor are you Bhishma's grandson, nor Dronacharya's pupil, nor Duryodhana's brother. You are the bravest warrior of this army and the enemy's army stands before you. What is your responsibility? Don't think about the possible death of your relatives, that their wives could become widows. No, the commander of an army should not be thinking about such things. If you did not want war, then you should have thought about it earlier and said 'no' at the very outset. Dhristyashumna has gathered thousands of warriors for battle. Weapons have been gathered, all the preparations have been made and now you are saying that you do not wish to fight. What stupidity is this! This is not your dharma but

your weakness, it is your attachment which is inspiring you to do this.' Sri Krishna had to resort to many different means in order to explain this to Arjuna, only then was Arjuna able to understand and he agreed to fight the war.

This same problem also arises between the owner of a hotel and its employees or between the head of an ashram and its residents. If my sannyasins misbehaved, I used to take them to task. If it was necessary, I also had to remove them from the ashram. I used to say very clearly, 'Look, in an individual capacity you may well be my disciple, but in this institution you are a worker and I am the head. If you are unable to work in the right manner, it is better that you leave. I am your guru, there is no doubt about it, but you cannot take undue advantage because of this.'

The question of dharma depends upon the nature of your duty and your responsibility at that particular moment of time. Suppose there is a case of murder being heard by a judge in the court and the murder has been committed by the son of the very same judge. Will he base his judgement influenced by his role as a judge or as a father? He must do so as a judge because that is his responsibility and duty at that time. If he gives a judgement as a father, then it is based upon his attachment and his personal relationship. No decision should be made based upon any personal relationship, whether it is the relationship of a husband or a wife or that of a son. Everywhere it is these personal relationships, attachments and associations which influence our actions. Look at politics, that is exactly what is happening. There is so much happening in India as well as abroad which is not based upon dharma but on selfishness and attachment.

What is dharma and what is adharma, people always have the wrong idea about this, they are deluded about it. I will give you another example. A woman left her husband because he used to drink and run after girls. She did a good thing. She divorced him and brought up the only son single-handedly. When the boy grew up, he used to do the same thing and was even violent towards her, but she could not leave her son. She

could not do the same thing; she could not leave her son in the way that she had left her husband. Her son may become a thief or a thug but she cannot leave him. The reason is attachment. It is not a question of right or wrong; one comes up against attachment here.

When one looks at things from a social perspective, one arrives at a different decision and from a personal perspective, the decision changes. One is a personal perspective where the person is at the centre and the other is the social one where society is important. If you look at it from a social perspective, society will say that she should not leave her husband. From a personal perspective, you will always give precedence to your happiness, your convenience and your comfort. If the husband is troubled by the wife or the wife is troubled by the husband, they leave each other. Here is a small incident. There was a boy, he married a girl. The boy was studying and also working somewhere. The girl was an airhostess and had to travel for work. Then they had a child who turned out to be handicapped. The boy started to tell her, 'You leave your work. Now shall I look after this child or do my studies? It is better if we separate.' Here he neither thought about the woman nor his son, he only thought about himself.

When we become the central point, based upon which we make any decision that is called a personal decision. Modern civilization gives a lot of importance to this. The main focus of modern civilization is that an individual is a separate world to himself. There have been many philosophers in the West who have propagated this idea. There have been many discussions and debates upon this issue that between society and the individual, who is greater? Who should be given precedence, whose choice should one follow? Should an individual be unhappy because of the dictates of society? Does an individual not have the right to do everything for his own happiness? There was a lot of discussion about this and eventually the West accepted the importance of the individual over society.

Earlier, even the western world gave more importance to society, like it is with us in India, but after much debate and discussion over the last hundred and fifty or two hundred years, they said, the individual is free from the time of his birth, he has the right to take his own decisions. He has the right to enjoy happiness, marry whom he wishes, study what he likes, choose his own profession, religion and name according to his own wish. He can choose to worship in the Hindu manner or Christian ways. He can wear a dhoti, trousers or shorts. There was only one thing which had to be adhered to. You can do what you like but the law and order of the country must not be flouted. If any of your actions create a problem in the social laws or conditions, then you are guilty and you will be punished.

In the West neither society nor family can interfere in the personal life of anyone. The father cannot say to the son that I have educated you and brought you up, you must do this for me. The wife cannot say to the husband that you have married me and taken vows, so you must do this or that. There people openly tell each other, 'I do not wish to live with you; our ways are too different. Instead of fighting all our lives, let us separate and like friends we can talk to each other over the telephone occasionally, at least we can maintain some friendship that way.'

By giving this importance to the individual, that society has given birth to many talented and gifted people. On the other hand, our society has suppressed the brilliance and gifts of the individual. I am telling the truth, I am not criticizing anyone. We are sannyasins, nationalism and vedic dharma runs in our blood but we know one thing that unless a person is not given personal independence, he cannot develop his intrinsic potential.

The parents wish to make their son a lawyer but his aptitude is more suited to engineering. The parents want to make the child a doctor but he is better suited to become a journalist. The parents want to make their son a professor but he is better suited to become a sannyasin. This decision

cannot be made by the parents because there is a difference between the parents and children. My brain is different to my father's, my mind is not the same as my mother's. My mother likes Gandhi and my father is impressed by Swami Dayananda; is that why I must love Swami Dayananda and Gandhi? I cannot do this.

The disadvantages of giving an individual freedom and predominance is something we can discuss later on, but if you want to see how a country can progress by giving individual freedom, look at the West. There are many talented people in the field of science, arts, music, in every field. The main reason for this is independence.

All boys and girls have their own dreams. When you were eight years old, you wanted to fly with the fairies. At the age of twelve, you were thinking about ghosts which you saw in the cartoons. When you turned eighteen, you thought of studying and becoming something. At the age of twenty-five, you wanted to earn a name for yourself in your profession. Each man is a dreamer and has his own priorities, desires and wishes. Each man needs attainments and is thirsty for success, but parents have blocked their paths. A big roadblock has been put on their path – marriage.

Whether you agree with it or not, marriage is the biggest obstacle to progress in life. Marriage is a necessity in a person's life, one cannot refute this truth. Marriage is also a social necessity, even this fact cannot be negated but along with this, marriage also becomes the biggest obstacle to progress in a person's life. If Swami Vivekananda had got married, what would have happened? Think about it. Yes, even Gandhi was married but he did not keep his marriage as a marriage. Kabirdas also was married. Here we are not talking about the marriage of Kabirdas, Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Gandhi, we are talking about the ordinary person.

What I am saying is addressed to the children and youth. You have been born with a certain potential, you have great potential and capabilities. Poverty cannot become an obstacle on your path. Poverty becomes an obstacle when your wife is

starving to death in front of your eyes, or your child is starving in front of your eyes. If you are starving, it will not be the cause of that much difficulty for you. This is my personal experience. In the days when I was a mendicant, there were times when for many days I would not receive any alms. Neither did I get anything during the day, nor in the evening and not the next day either. One day I got a terrible headache and eventually I had to beg for a beedi from someone and smoke it! What to do, I had to reduce that headache. Since I was alone, it did not trouble me at all. This is not what we would consider trouble rather see it as an experience. If I had a wife or child with me, it would have troubled me so much!

An individualistic life based upon freedom – I am offering you all a glimpse of society in India of the 21st century. In the 21st century, children will not be influenced by society but by their own personal individuality. If this does not happen, India will not be able to go ahead towards progress. Today's age is such that in the time it takes to go to Bhagalpur from here one can reach London from Calcutta. During such times, the principles which guide our society will have to change. Whether you take caste systems, the dharma of the varnashrama, or whether it is the dharma of husband and wife, change will have to be brought about everywhere. If you do not do it, it will be unfair. You will become hypocrits and torture yourselves. It is a very straightforward fact.

You should create such principles now which can be followed by today's society and people. Only such dharma, such principles and such ideas should be placed before children which will benefit them. What is man's greatest wish today? One's position in life? No, it is one's attainments, one's gains. Today people do not place that much importance on position or quality of life, they are not interested in it at all, but it is what one can attain in life which is important. What your life is like – we have nothing to do with that but what have you been able to become? That is what we want to know. A scientist, lawyer, doctor, writer, painter, journalist, dancer, musician, teacher or social worker – what are you?

If you ask these villagers what they want, they will say that the fields should be good, there should be sprinklers in the fields so that irrigation can take place through them; they would like tissue-culture seeds, there should be at least one hundred and fifty kilos of wheat in one harvest. They want all this but they are unable to do anything about it. Why? They teach the same old bullock-cart culture to their children. They tell their son, 'You! Why don't you listen to me? Why don't you do this?' Whereas they should say, 'Son, do whatever you wish to do but become something in life! Don't come home after the age of fourteen, go earn your own living. I am not going to leave this farm and field to you, I am going to sell it before I die.'

The children in India always look towards the home because they will receive a legacy from the father that is why they are weak. Children in foreign countries are tough because they know that they are not going to get anything from their father. The father tells the lawyer before he dies that all his money is to be given to the church, to some charitable institution but not to his children. There the son and daughter do not receive anything as an inheritance. The father gives all his earnings to some institution, whether to an organization that works with the handicapped, the blind, an orphanage or a school. That is why institutions are so wealthy there.

When a man thinks that there is no one who is going to help him and he has to make his own way, then the power within him arises, his third eye opens and he begins to see life's road through the eyes of that potential. He has to struggle. Life does not become prosperous without struggle. If struggles end, life also ends. If your father has left you thirty or forty thousand rupees, a few acres of land, a house or two then the feeling of insecurity will not be there in you, you will simply not have that concern within you. There is a roof over my head, enough money to eat for a few months, okay, I will wear torn clothes but I will survive, won't I? Someone who does not have anything will not think like you. He will think, 'My god! What will I eat? I will have to do something or

the other.’ In a person, who has a lack of means, who has no support, where all doors are closed to him, a strange potential takes birth within. Then that person can earn gold by selling mud, he can earn money even by selling grass. So much so that people are even surviving by selling their urine. Specific hormones are secreted in urine which are used for treatment. Now, the first person who came to sell his urine would have had a background of deprivation and insecurity, isn’t it?

Today’s boys tell their fathers straight to their faces, even daughters have started saying it. Why? Because we elders interfere too much in the personal lives of the young. We want to mould them in our own image, we want them to become carbon copies of ourselves. If our face is not good, then the carbon copy will also turn out like that.

The secret of success in the West is that they have given the individual freedom to progress. Not just in the fields of science and economics, the West has given birth to talented persons in the spiritual field as well. The amount of work that has been done there on yoga, on spirituality, on the Upanishads, on the *Mahabharata* and Puranas has not been accomplished here. Most of our big spiritual movements, whether Swami Vivekananda’s, Bhaktivedanta or Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Sivananda or Ma Anandamayi Ma, have been nurtured and supported to a great extent by Westerners.

Satsang 18

22 November 1997

Giving food to a hungry person or a three-wheeler cycle to a lame person is not called help. Who is helping whom? Man should just try to improve his own actions. We improved our karmas in the last birth and that is why we are living well today. Whatever man does, he does for himself, to improve his karmas. When you criticize another, abuse, fight or kill someone, then you are spoiling your own karma. When you feed another person, you are improving your karma. Every action comes back to you. That is why it is necessary for man to improve his karma.

Paropkaar or philanthropy

How can man improve his karma? The easiest way to improve your karmas is thinking about others along with thinking about yourself. That is called reflections on the wellbeing of others or *paropkaar* or *paramaarth*. *Par* means another or others, *par-upkar* means doing good for others. Who is it that we do good for? For our wife or our children. Today our lives are limited to just our wife and children, that's it. Thinking about others and those who are less fortunate and those who are in trouble, that is whom one must think about.

The person who thinks about others the way in which he thinks about himself is called a *jnani* or *Vedantin*, and that *bhava* or feeling is called *atmabhava*. When there is an ache in my body, I experience it but when your body aches, I do not experience it. Then what is *atmabhava*? When there is *atmabhava*, it creates a bond between two people. There was a great saint in Maharashtra, his name was Eknath. Once he

had brought water from Gangotri and was on his way to offer it at Rameshwaram. As he approached the precincts of the Rameshwaram temple, he saw a donkey lying on the ground with his tongue hanging out and almost dying of thirst. A question arose in his mind – Should I offer the water to this god in the form of a donkey or to the god who is in the form of a stone? In those days it was a very arduous task to bring water from Gangotri to Rameshwaram on foot. Eventually he offered the water to the donkey and had darshan of the divine. That is called atmabhava.

The principle of atmabhava

Atmabhava is the foundation of Vedanta. When two become one, that is called *advaita*. In the very same manner, two become one with atmabhava. That is why you do not need charity, dharma, pity, nothing, you just need to have atmabhava. The continuous prayer to the divine should be that we should be able to share in another person's sorrow and joy. What will happen with that? If your prayer is heard, you may be made a partner and given two or four lakhs of rupees from somewhere. At that time, do not forget your prayer to god. You had said 'Make me a partner' and god gave you two or four lakhs of rupees, but you only shared it with your wife and children, you forgot the others. Why do you look upon only your daughter as yours? I also have a daughter. Give her also some gold jewellery! This is the greatest lack in our community life. Our worship is incomplete. We go to temples, it is very good, we offer pooja, very nice, but that is not complete worship. Complete worship is when man experiences sensitivity and compassion for all beings. Look at the lives of great people, it is the same story with all of them.

I will tell you a true story from my life. It took place about fifty years ago when I was living in my guru's ashram. The Kumbha Mela was held in Haridwar. When the Kumbha Mela takes place in Haridwar, many people also visit Rishikesh and Badrinath. Many travellers came to Rishikesh. One day I was

taking a bucket with me and going into the jungle when I noticed something that looked like a bundle of clothes lying by the side of the road, there were flies buzzing around it. I did not pay much attention and carried on. The next day I found out that my guru-brother, Swami Chidananda, had picked up a leper in a gunny sack and brought him to the ashram. He was a very old man, very thin and frail, belonging to some place in Uttar Pradesh. He had contracted leprosy and had come to breathe his last in this place of pilgrimage thinking that he would attain liberation. He was only able to go up to the road above Lakshman Jhoola Sheshdhara but was unable to go any further; he was too weak. He had spread a gunny sack on the road and lay down on it. It was him that I had noticed the previous day, but my sight was not able to look beyond that.

Swami Chidananda made a little hut for him, he also started treating him. There were sores all over his body. There are two kinds of leprosy, one where the body dries up and another kind is suppurating leprosy when parts of the body start to fall away. That is what this man had. Now everyone in the ashram got the duty to look after him, I also was assigned a duty, that of shaving him. He needed to be given a shave every two or three days. He was such a person who only spoke abusive language. One day when I was shaving him, there was a little jerk, the blade cut him and he began to bleed. He began showering me with abuses. I also got angry, I said, 'First of all, we have brought you here, we are serving you and you cannot even show any gratitude.' Then he said, 'What great favour have you done? I had come here to die. If you hadn't brought me here, by now I would have been liberated. What favour are you doing for me? You people are pushing me back into this world of sorrows. You are all useless, you only talk of *jnana* but there is no real knowledge in your hearts. I wish that you pick me up right now and throw me into the Ganga.' But the seva continued and after two months of regular care, he regained health and simply disappeared one day.

Seva

Swami Sivananda used to tell us that when a child goes to school, he first goes to the primary section, then to the middle school, then to the matriculation, later he goes to college and eventually enters the university. If you admit him directly into college, what will happen? He will not understand anything and just sit there like a dummy. So what is the solution? First of all, admit him into primary school. So which is the primary school of life? Seva. Seva is where you learn the alphabet of life. If you do seva, you will learn the A-B-C-D of life. And who is served? Not your family but you serve those people from whom you cannot have any expectation of reward. Do not say seva of husband or wife or parents. There are always expectations. Isn't that so? There is always some little expectation somewhere. When you perform actions without any hope or desire for any fruit from it, that is called seva. This is the bija mantra of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*Karmanyevaadhikaraste ma phaleshukadachana;
Ma karmaphalaheturbhurmatesangoastvakarmani.*

Thy right is to work only, but never with its fruits;
let not the fruits of action be thy motive, nor let thy
attachment be to inaction. (2:47)

That action which is performed without any desire for its fruit or reward is called seva. Which is why one should serve and help those people from whom we have no expectations. Sometimes it also happens that we serve someone and they inflict unexpected harm upon us. One should also serve such people. This is seva, the A-B-C-D of life.

Love

After this comes love. Who doesn't love his wife, children or siblings? Does anyone have to teach you how to love? No, it is natural, spontaneous, but one needs to learn how to love others. One should love those people who are not our own family or friends. The Bible says a very beautiful thing about

this, 'Love thy neighbour.' Now, who is your neighbour? The one who lives next door to us, also the one who lives further down from next door and also those who live even further away than that. Sometimes it feels like the whole of Deoghar is one's neighbour, all of India can also be one's neighbour, the whole of Asia can be one's neighbour! It is written:

Udaaritaanaamtivasudhaivakutumbakam.

For someone who has a big heart, the whole world is their neighbour.

Ayamnijahaparovetigananaalaghuchetasaam.

Those whose hearts are small, they are the ones who say that this is mine and that is yours.

But for the large-hearted, the whole world is their neighbourhood. For now, just the villages nearby of Amarwa, Devichak, Tarabad and Lakdiganj are our neighbours. So far, our strength only extends upto there. So far, we have only studied that much, but the day we start going to college, that day we shall say that the whole world is our neighbourhood. Now we don't have the courage to say that. So this is the second standard or class of love.

Daan – charity

The third class is charity or giving. There is a very beautiful story in the Upanishads. Some people were sitting together, there were clouds floating by in the sky, and a sound was heard – 'Da, Da, Da'. They wondered what that sound was. One amongst them was a rakshasa, a demon, and he said the clouds were saying 'Dayadhvam'. The second person was a wealthy man, a millionaire, he said 'Damadhvam.' The third one must have been a good person like yourselves, he said, 'Dadadhvam.' All three ascribed a different meaning to the sound 'Da'. The demon said 'Dayadhvam', the wealthy man said 'Damadhvam' and the ordinary man said 'Dadadhvam.' *Dayadhvam* means being compassionate, *damadhvam* means

restraining oneself and *dadadhvam* means giving. So the demons should be compassionate, those who indulge themselves should learn restraint, learn to control themselves, and if you are a normal human being then your dharma is giving. People like you were told ‘dadadhvam’, give. This is the third lesson. Giving lightens your pocket, it also keeps fear of the Income Tax at bay. Even if they do come, they are not going to find anything!

The stages of spiritual life

Seva, prem and daan, serve, love and give – these are the three primary classes. Without doing these three, if you sit down to meditate or hold your nose and start doing pranayama or try to awaken your kundalini or attempt to look for god, nothing is going to happen. Without going to primary school, if you go straight to college you are not going to understand anything. This is the state of everyone. *Seva, prem and daan* are the foundations of life, then one can build the house of life with *atmashuddhi, dhyana and atmasakshatkar* or purification of the soul, meditation and God-realization. You can see the roof, walls, floor and pillars of a house but what is the condition of the foundation that lies below? If there is no foundation, how can the house stand? The foundation of life is *seva*. *Seva* is the creed of everyone, serve your parents, serve your husband, serve your siblings, after all that is also a part of life, but do not see that as the end of your *seva*.

Everyone must improve their karma. I always say that I must have done some good karmas which is why god has given me such a good guru, a healthy body and a bright mind. Now life has been lived, it is evening and the night will come. That is why I have come to Deoghar, I will leave from here. When I call out to Him, ‘O God!’ then He says, ‘Listen Satyananda, all the seats are full, there is no reservation available. Yes, I have noted your name though.’ God says there is no seat right now. Okay, I am on the waiting list. The fun of the matter is that I also want a return ticket. I said, ‘I want to come back,

I want a return ticket as well.’ He replied, ‘Not yet, wait for a while.’ Okay, I’ll wait!

Should we also wish to go?

Well, no one really wants to go, I know that very well. When the Pandavas were in exile, one day Yudhishtira sent his brothers to the lake to fetch water. All of them fainted after drinking the water there. There was a yaksha who used to say, “Only if you can answer my questions, you may drink the water.” Yudhishtira asked him, “What is the question?” The first one was *kimascharyam*, or what is the most astonishing thing in this world?

*Ahanyahanibhootanigachhantihyamalayam;
Sheshahasthavaramichhantikimascharyamatahaparam.*

Yudhishtira replied that the most astonishing thing in this world is that every morning and every evening, people are going to the house of Yamaraj, the Lord of Death, yet the ones left behind all want to stay on. Now what is more astonishing than that?

If you say that you want to go then where have you made your request for a ticket? You tell god that it will be good if the train doesn’t come just yet. The day man truly wishes to go there, he is totally prepared, from that day onwards his mind will not be involved in anything in this world. His mind will be fixed on god for twenty-four hours because if man wishes to travel further, then he has to make sure he has everything he needs for that journey. What one needs for that onward journey is only singing the Lord’s name and a life without any desires, nothing else. Live for others, only for others. The person who only lives for others, he does not ever worry about himself; that is really all there is to it.

Once a mahatma said to me, ‘Look, Lakshmi stays with those people who do not misuse her gifts, who use her gifts for others and not for themselves.’ I said that is an excellent thought. I thought to myself that god, if you give me one rupee then 99.99 paise will be for others and one paisa I

will keep for my loincloth. I just thought like that in jest and that is exactly what happened. The other thing that the man told me was that when Lakshmi goes away, then do not cry. Think that now you are free. I said, 'Yes! This is also very good.' But it is very difficult. When money comes, there is a lot of happiness. That day people go to the 'hotel-bottle-total' and when the money is over, their face becomes small, their blood pressure goes up, the heart beats faster, some people even get upset stomachs. Didn't that mahatma say this must not happen? Lakshmi is like water. Like the waves which rise, race forward and then recede, that is the form of Lakshmi.

The definition of good works

Offering five litres of milk to Shiva is good work for sure but that is not enough. When you do something which benefits others, that is called good work and that is the real definition of dharma as well. A lot of people visit temples every day, go on pilgrimages to holy places. They say that they are very *dharmic* but that is not the complete definition of dharma. Of course, one should do that as well but just running after god is not the complete definition of dharma. Doing anything which benefits other people and all other creatures is the real definition of dharma. That creature may be an animal, a human being, a criminal, a good person, a bad person or a saint, it can be anybody. That action by which someone receives help – if a hungry person receives something to eat, if a sick person becomes healthy – that is called good work. This is what all saints and seers have said and done.

Sorrow is the lot of everyone in this world. There is no person who does not have some sorrow. Even happiness belongs to everyone. There is no creature who has not received some happiness. Happiness and sorrow are experienced by everyone like day and night. The person who does good work does not remain sad even in sorrow, the very meaning of sorrow changes for him. Every person must think of just this – God! Grant me the wisdom and capacity to do good, to help others.

***Ramacharitamanas* – the key to rural literacy**

I do not use the word 'literacy' when I am speaking with the village people, this is my psychology. I tell them to learn the *Ramacharitamanas*. If you tell the villagers that they should learn to read and write, they will say that what is the use of it, all I have to do is collect cow dung. Initially I tried to make them understand, then I said, 'Forget it, why should I break my head over these people?' Now I give them the *Ramacharitamanas*, I tell them to read it every day, they will find peace and joy. Then they will have to read it! And these people really do read the *Ramacharitamanas* every day. During Navaratri, there is no place to sit here for the *Navaanparayan* when the entire *Ramacharitamanas* is read over that period, they all come here to chant. I altered the definition of the word 'literacy.'

I performed an operation on a lady in a village here. One day I asked her if she could read and write and she replied that she was illiterate. I asked her why she does not learn to read and write. She said, 'Swamiji, what can I do? I have to tend to the household now.' Then I thought to myself, she is right, she does not have to go and open an account in a bank, she does not need to pass any bills, her requirements are limited. Then I kept quiet. She used to come here regularly. A few days later, I was distributing copies of the *Ramayana* to some people and she said, 'Please give me one also.' I asked her, 'Will you read it?' and she said, 'Yes, I will.' I am telling you the truth, the next time she came here, she had started reading the *Ramayana*!

This is something to do with psychology. When you tell the villagers the purpose of why it is necessary to be literate, they will not be able to relate to that. After all, they spend their time collecting cow dung. If you explain the purpose of literacy to the girls of the village who are daily wage workers and belong to a very ordinary class, they will read the *Ramacharitamanas* and *Hanuman Chalisa*. But if you tell them:

Vidyanaamnarasyaroopamadhikamprachchhannuguptamadhanam.

Knowledge is the hidden wealth of human beings, the ornament adorning their being.

That is not going to enter into their heads. So this is the psychology which I have adopted.

The *Ramacharitamanas* is an excellent medium for the literacy of the average Indian population. I am giving all of you a hint. This is Indian psychology because Indians say, 'Why should I learn to read and write?' especially the working labour class. After all what future do they have before them, what inspiration or challenge do they have? In the present environment and administrative systems, what is their participation? They get up in the morning and collect cow dung. If I leave a few bricks on the road in front of our Akhara, they will disappear in five minutes. They just come and clean it up! When we prune the trees here, when we cut branches, after an hour you will not see a single twig anywhere. I say, 'Good!' I feel very happy. This is what they do in their life. Now what place does literacy have in their lives? They are not aware of the place that literacy or being able to read has in life. Which is why a lot of them drop out of school.

That is why if you want to make them literate, take the *Ramacharitamanas*. Each boy and girl should be able to read the *Ramacharitamanas* from beginning to end. This is Indian literacy. I am saying this after seeing the way our country and its administration is going. I have travelled all over the world. I do not see a single glimpse of the possibility that in the coming fifty to one hundred years the villages here will become like the villages in Japan, Switzerland, England or France. No, this will not happen at all because the basic problems which are faced here are related to the present and not to the future. I do not accept your figures. I have my own calculations. The problem faced by over 70% of our population is 'today' and not 'tomorrow' because this country is primarily agricultural. The progress of an agrarian country cannot be based on technology. Here the technology should be for farming and cattle-rearing and not for supersonic

airplanes. We people cannot do anything about this, we are common people.

Villagers should learn to read and write, but what are they to do with that literacy, do they want to become petty clerks? What will these girls of the village do with literacy? Of what use is it in their lives? To read the *Ramacharitamanas*. They sit down every morning and evening and read the *Ramacharitamanas*. An hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. There will be an influence on the mind, they will receive the ideals of Rama and Sita, they will learn about Ravana and that influence will also be seen in their children. Their genetic composition will improve, their samskaras will improve. Where the *Ramacharitamanas* is sung, prosperity will follow. I am not talking about wealth; I am talking about prosperity. Prosperity means improvement, growth. Today there is a little hut, tomorrow there will be a small house, the next day a toilet will be added on. People will say, he is prospering.

Prosperity restrains people, it does not let them stray away. Wealth leads people astray because along with wealth come some bad habits. Where there is a rose, there will be a nice fragrance; where there is shit, it will smell bad; and where there is wealth, there are negative qualities too. When greatness comes, arrogance follows, where there is wealth, indulgence comes. In prosperity there is neither indulgence nor arrogance.

Prosperity keeps people always humble. Today you have made one room, next year you might add a bedroom. This year you have used straw, next year you will use tin, then make a toilet next. This year you have a basic toilet, next year make a better one, this is called prosperity. Those people who want to become rich overnight, they are treading the wrong path because with wealth come bad habits, indulgences, wasteful expenditure. All the enthusiasm, inspiration and the drive to initiate new schemes will be finished. The struggles of a rich man are along the wrong paths.

Until such time as our people understand and accept the need for literacy, this literacy drive will be unsuccessful.

Except for the state of Kerala, in every other part of this country adult education and literacy has failed. What is the reason for this? Look, whatever I ask you to do, only one question arises in your mind – ‘What is the use of doing this?’ I tell you to go to Bhagalpur and you ask, ‘Why?’ This is how each one thinks. A small girl comes here from the village; her name is Sunita. Every day a sannyasin teaches her A-B-C-D and she says, ‘I will not study.’ When she was asked why she does not want to learn, she said, ‘What am I going to do with it, what is the purpose?’ There is only one picture in front of her, she will get married, go to her in-laws, every morning she will have to collect cow dung and prepare it into cakes for fuel, wash dishes and clothes. That is the one image which she has in her mind. What does that picture have to do with literacy? Which third eye does one attain after learning to read and write? There are many literate fools in this world, aren’t there?

The *Ramacharitamanas* is something which must be given to our society. It has two benefits: literacy and positive thoughts. The greatest thing about it is that having the *Ramacharitamanas* in every home is a sign of auspiciousness. A lighted lamp is a symbol of auspiciousness in a home, so is the *Ramacharitamanas*. In a home where the children and parents read the *Ramacharitamanas* together every morning, negativities will stay away from that home, there will be discussions about Rama. After all, Rama was the *maryada purushottam*, the perfect man. When Valmiki asked Narada, ‘Lord! Tell me who is the person with the best qualities, who is the best in speech, in beauty, in keeping his word, the most obedient person, who has the most perfect willpower and is most humble?’ Narada said, ‘There is only one such person, Sri Rama!’

Now if the tale of such a person is read in every home, then we can tell our Sunita, ‘See, child! This is the story of Sri Rama. If you read this, you will like it very much. Even if you don’t like it, when you sing its verses, you will sway to its tune and experience a little joy.’ All the foreigners here

read the *Ramacharitamanas* every morning at four o'clock. At four every morning, the drum plays and the chanting of *Ramacharitamanas* starts, they sing along with the dholak and manjira for forty minutes. First they read the entire verse and then the meaning is explained. The sannyyasin who explains the meaning is from Germany. Why do they read this? After all, he is German. Then why did he learn Hindi? He learnt it so that he could read the *Ramacharitamanas*. This is the foundation of literacy in India.

Swamiji, why did you leave Ganga Darshan and settle down here?

Ah, that is a very long story. It was never my dream to run an ashram. My nature has always been one of solitude, to live a solitary existence. My tradition is not yoga and neither have I had any proper training in yoga. My study, as it is amongst those of our tradition, has been that of Vedanta. My Gururiji gave me the mandate to establish yoga, to give it an elevated status. I wanted to do it but I was not able to. What I am telling you is of the period between 1956 and 1960.

Then in 1963, I went to Tryambakeshwar and prayed to my ishta deva, Lord Shiva, 'I have to repay the debt to my guru. Please help me for twenty years.' Along with that prayer, I also made a pledge that when the work would be completed, I would leave everything and return. In 1964, I commenced the work and left it in 1983. I worked for twenty years. Since it was my promise that I would leave everything and return, I had to leave it all. I had an agreement with God. So according to that, I had to leave Munger, and it was also part of the agreement that I would never return to Munger. That is what was the important part.

The second thing is that now I am in the eventide of my life. Everyone has to go. Some leave from the house, some from a hospital bed, some go in an accident. I thought, 'The best place is Deoghar.' I took this to be the airport for my next journey, my plane will leave from here and I have made the request as well. The reply from there is that no seats are

available right now, that is why I have come here. The only prayer to god that I have in my heart is that the day I drop this body, on that day let me have no institutions nor any money in my pocket, no wife or children, no one before me and no one behind me, no doctor standing in front of me, no tube going into my nose or any bedpan next to me, I do not want to see the face of a nurse.

*Itna to karnaswami, jab praan tan se nikale,
Tera hi naam lete yeh praan tan se nikale.*

Please grant me just this one wish, O Lord, when my life leaves my body, May I just have your name on my lips as my breath leaves my body.

This is possible only in Deoghar. In Munger there is a typewriter and computer right next to me. Taking one's last breath in such a place is not appropriate, it is not an ideal way to die for a sadhu.

To die in a hospital, to die in the midst of wife and children, surrounded by disciples and devotees, an income tax file on one side, legal papers on the other side, I don't want all that. I have nothing to do with all that. All I want is that when I am dying I have the thought that 'Oh, God! I have told that man that I would give him a cycle, I have not been able to do it,' thinking about the welfare of others, thinking about the good for others, to draw the last breath with a feeling of *nishkama seva*, service, without seeking reward. There should be a thought about serving someone, an image of the poor and suffering should be in my mind, that I should think about some TB patient, that I should feel concern for some poor widow, this is an excellent way to go. That is why I have come to Deoghar. I like it here. The water is good, the air is fresh, the people are nice. It is just that I haven't got a confirmed seat for my onward journey.

Upliftment of womankind

Womankind has been deprived by religion, society and even saints and mahatmas out of sheer fear. Swami Satyananda is not afraid of anyone, he is fearless. I have a care and concern for girls, if you don't like it you may stay at home. My mother was also a woman, everyone is born of woman, the woman who has given you birth. You have to repay the debt. I will give beautiful sarees, jewellery, money, everything as dowry. Why should I not do so? After all, *kanyadaan* is one of the most important responsibilities in our vedic culture. If we pull back from this responsibility, we will enter into an age of social unrest and chaos. No matter how difficult it may be, this is one duty which we must fulfil. Yes, in time if our girls become as secure and independent as the girls in Europe and America, let's not bother about that right now. Such a day will also dawn.

I do not wish that girls remain dependent. That they can stand on their own two feet, study, emerge out of the kitchen is what I wish for. The kitchen is not the only place for women. The whole house is her arena; after all she is the 'housewife'. Such a time can come and it should come when our girls can stand shoulder to shoulder with boys. That is not the situation now. The cycle of today's society has a puncture in one tyre, it is weak and helpless. Can any vehicle run on only one wheel?

The funny thing is that when she entered your home, she did not come empty-handed, she brought a full suitcase with her. She came in the form of Lakshmi, and you have turned her into your servant. She washes your clothes, cleans your dishes, she does everything. Why don't you do it? She brought a cycle or a motorcycle to your house, gold and silver and how have you treated her? At least introspect and repent. It is time to reflect upon the deprivation which our women have suffered at the hands of society.

Today America, England, Germany and France have risen to such heights not because the people there are brilliant but because of their womankind. All the girls of white people enjoy formidable education. Those countries which you are

running after, whom you are trying to imitate, they have come up only because of women. Two hundred years ago, their situation was like it is here now. Two hundred years ago, their girls left the confines of the home, they had to. Hundreds and thousands of their menfolk died in the First and Second World Wars. It was the conditions of those times which forced women to come out of the home. That is how they have reached where they are today.

Without uplifting womankind, no family or society can prosper. The idea that we have about women that they are only objects of enjoyment is very wrong. She is not only meant to be enjoyed, she is worthy of worship as well. An object of enjoyment is only one of her forms and a very limited one at that. A woman is always worthy of worship, now learn to worship her with love, in the form of a sister or a disciple, I couldn't care less. The way in which we have kept our women so far is very wrong. Society and religion have prescribed certain boundaries for women which we have all accepted but that does not mean that we handicap our daughters and keep them locked up in the house.

There weren't so many restrictions and rules imposed upon women in vedic times; these are remnants of cultures from outside. In vedic culture, women like Gargi and Madalasa used to sit in the court of King Janaka and participate in scholarly debates. This is something you all must understand. If not today then tomorrow, women will have to be made capable. If she enters into the world without being made capable, what will happen? She will be cheated. She will have to be made capable and for that education is an absolute necessity.

That is why I place so much emphasis on education. Whether you have a son or a daughter, you must educate them both. Actually, I am not entirely satisfied with today's education system. Please bear in mind that India is living in several centuries simultaneously. You can see life as it was in the 16th century here as well as the life of the 20th century. Then the education which is imparted must also be like that.

Giving 20th century education to someone living like they are in the 16th century is incorrect.

What do they teach children in the rural schools? The name of Aurangzeb's daughter. What are we going to do with this information? Even if you don't teach them that, it will be fine. What we need is that if you wish to make soap, how you can do it. If we wish to cultivate mushrooms here, how can that be done, what is the way in which we can market them? The first thing is economic life. If there is no money in the house, how is one to live? The kind of education we give in the villages should be such that it is practical and can help their economic state. There is no need to impart religious education in villages, the women here are already very good at that. Pandits can make a mistake while reading the almanac, but these people do not make any such mistakes. They know all about the constellations and the auspicious times. They might be illiterate and uneducated, but all their festivals are accurate and timed according to the constellations. Their knowledge about directions and the stars is impeccable. The most important thing in day-to-day life is financial knowledge which is an indispensable need for them, and this is something they lack.



Satsang 19

23 November 1997

This year about three hundred brides-to-be in this panchayat will be gifted bridal kits as they prepare to go to their husbands' house. These bridal kits are gifted every year but this year every bride-to-be in my neighbourhood has been chosen to be the recipient of this prasad. Earlier in India, by the time girls turned fifteen years of age, they would be married off and after spending a day or two in their in-laws' house, they would return to their mother's house. Then after the age of seventeen or eighteen, they would go back to their in-laws' house; this used to be called *dwiragaman* or the second arrival. That used to be the final goodbye from their mother's house. It is on the occasion of this *dwiragaman* that I present these gifts to the brides in the form of auspicious blessings for their new life. There are also gifts for the husband in this kit like trousers, shirts, a coat or watch and for the brides there are beautiful expensive saris, jewellery and all the items for *solah shringar*; the sixteen different adornments which are the mark of a newly-wed bride. The gifting of this *solah shringar* to brides is a very ancient tradition of India and it is considered as an act of immense virtue. Without silver and gold, this bridal kit is not complete. Whether rich or poor, something or the other is always given in the form of silver and gold or diamonds and pearls.

All these things are part of Sita's dowry which will be offered to her in the evening on the 4th of December. After this, everything will be distributed to the new brides as Sita's prasad. All the items we receive in the form of clothing and jewellery is accepted as going towards preparing Sita's dowry.

That day you will see how these beautifully adorned doll-like brides are gifted this prasad as their wedding gifts. They have all arrived here, I have spoken with all of them.

Swami Satsangi, Swami Niranjana, Swami Atmananda, everyone is busy with the preparations. Such preparations are common in India during the time of weddings. All the guests who visit during this occasion always come bearing some gift or the other but traditionally, sannyasins are not allowed to attend such functions. Perhaps the reason behind this was that if the sannyasins participate in such functions, they may also be tempted to wish for similar things themselves and get entangled in this business. That is why they were kept away from marriage ceremonies and occasions, but I have given them full permission to participate in these functions. I am not concerned about what people may say about it. If there are some who do not like it, they can stay away. It is a very good thing to develop some kind of relationship with these Sita-like lovely girls. This is also a relationship.

The people here have great enthusiasm for the marriage of Sita and Sri Rama. Last year practically everybody from this panchayat had come to attend the program, especially the women and children. In the whole world and more so in India, marriage is one of the most important events in life. People say one is born once, one dies once and one also gets married only once. Marriage is a symbol of beauty and joy. It is only Lord Shiva who is permitted to come to the marriage ceremony in whichever manner he chooses – naked, clothed in tiger skin, smeared with *bhasma*, ashes, with snakes around his neck and a pipe in his hand. He is given total freedom but no one else is extended this privilege. When marriage is the symbol of beauty and joy, then on that occasion everything and everyone present must be the most beautiful, isn't it?

***Devbhoomi* or the land of gods in India – Garhwal**

In our Indian culture, Garhwal is called *devbhoomi* or the land of gods. Garhwal is the area which encompasses the holy sites of pilgrimage like Yamunotri, Gangotri, Badrinath,

Kedarnath and Tapovan. This place has been considered as the land of the gods since time immemorial. There are temples everywhere in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Punjab and Gujarat. The Godavari and Narmada are also considered as holy rivers but in our Indian culture, if you read the Vedas, Puranas, *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, *devbhoomi* refers to only one place, Garhwal. Garhwal starts at Haridwar, that is the gate to Hari.

Like there is the Gateway of India, this is the gateway to Hari. It is the gateway to Hari as well as Hara or Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Vaishnavaites call it Haridwar, Shaivites call it Haradwar, they say it is the gateway to Shiva because there is a great lingam of Shiva in Kedarnath. On the other side, Badrinath is the abode of Sri Narayana himself. The Ganga emerges from Gangotri and Yamunotri is the source of the Yamuna. So this is called devbhoomi and anyone who wishes to go on a pilgrimage, always goes there first. They don't come to Deoghar, nor do they go to Calcutta or Orissa. Pilgrimage or *teertha* means Uttarkhand. Even if anyone from the South of India wishes to take sannyasa, they will only go there. Sannyasa and having darshan of the gods is in North India, which is why the area which starts after Haridwar is considered holy. The poorest of the poor, even those belonging to the labour classes, everyone who wishes to go on a pilgrimage head in that direction, they come in the hundreds and thousands.

In 1988 after I left Munger, I went to Varanasi. I stayed there for a month, then I visited Pashupatinath and other places of pilgrimage before going to Delhi. From Delhi I took a taxi and drove up to Haridwar. When I reached, the first place I went to was Yamunotri. I got to Yamunotri by evening. The next day I set off from there and reached Gangotri on the third day. I like Gangotri very much because I have stayed there once through the entire period of winter. There was only ice all around. My room, the door and windows, everything was covered in ice. It was difficult to come out of the room. I used to relieve myself on paper and throw it out of the

window. I used to cook rotis for myself in the room and smoke chillums all day. Just smoking marijuana and performing the difficult sadhana of pranayama, that is what I used to do all day long. I wanted to awaken my kundalini, you see. I had to pay the price for the habit of smoking chillums, I had to leave Gangotri. November, December, January and February – I stayed there for those four months. There was no one else there, I was all by myself.

This time I stayed for three days. On the seventh day, I was in Kedarnath. On the eighth day, I went to Badrinath and on the ninth day, I was in Rishikesh. I completed the pilgrimage to Devbhoomi in ten days. This trip could also have been done in seven days but due to the stay in Gangotri it took a little longer. You can go right up to the Badrinath temple in a taxi, even the Gangotri temple can be reached by taxi. For the trip to Yamunotri, you have to get out of the taxi and trek up for about ten kilometres. It is the same with Kedarnath, the last stretch of the way is very tough, it is practically a vertical climb up the hillside. The best period to go there is between April and May. At this time in the month of November, all the temples are closed and will only reopen their doors in April.

The Shivlingam in Kedarnath is not a small simple one at all, it is a rock which resembles a bull and it is hard to guess how far deep into the ground it goes. The abhishek there is performed with ghee. Shiva is massaged and worshiped with ghee. It is a very beautiful place. We have two kinds of statues. One is the permanent one which is established in the temple and worshiped daily, the other one is movable and is taken out in procession around the temple and its surroundings. After Diwali when the Badrinath temple closes, the murti is brought down to Pandukeshwar where the pandits live. So there is another murti which can be brought down at this time and it can be worshipped regularly there. In Badrinath, the door to the temple is closed and there is a very large lamp inside in front of the murti. That lamp is lit and the door is sealed before closing the temple. On the day when the temple doors are reopened, the lamp is still burning there. The temple

stays closed for six months. It closes on Diwali and opens on Akshaya Tritiya. This is the system that has been established for all the four temples because in the winter there is a lot of ice in those high mountains.

Lower down from there in Joshimath, there is a temple where it is said that Shankaracharya performed austerities. There is also a place in the Math which is known as Shankaracharya's place.

See, there were two Shankaracharyas. The one about whom you are speaking, his name was Shankar. He is called Adi Shankar by us, the first Shankar who was born in Kerala, he was a Namboodri Brahmin who left his home at the age of six and took sannyasa. He received this sannyasa with consent from his mother. His father had passed away, he asked his mother's permission to take sannyasa and promised her that he would come to perform her last rites. Sannyasins are not supposed to perform last rites for anyone, those are the rules but he told his mother that he would perform the last rites for her. Then he travelled from Kerala to the Narmada river near the Mandhata mountain where the temple of Omkareshwar stands today. There is a jyotirlingam called Omkareshwar Mahadev where the Narmada river flows near Indore.

A great saint called Govindapada lived there. Shankaracharya was accepted by him as a disciple and he spent some time there. He began his studies of the Vedas at the age of six and by the time he was ten years of age, he had studied all the Vedas. After that he left Omkareshwar and came to the banks of the Ganga in the Himalayas. He sat there and wrote commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahma Sutras* and the Upanishads. By the time he had reached the age of sixteen, he had completed his writing. That body of work is called *Shankar Bhashya* and it is studied by people all over the world; eminent scholars conduct research on it in famous universities. Such a great scholar was Adi Shankar.

At the age of sixteen, he commenced his 'Digvijay' campaign. He first went to Kashmir where he received much

respect and honour from the king. The king sent a small company from his army along with Shankaracharya and made generous endowments. Thereafter, wherever Shankaracharya went, the army of the king of Kashmir accompanied him. This small contingent of the army used to help him, set up camp for him with tents and other such arrangements. He went to many places and spread the teachings of the Vedas. It was like a renaissance of vedic culture because during that period Buddhism and Jainism were far more prevalent and had become popular all over India. All the ancient statues had been removed from temples and they had placed their own statues there. It was during this time that Shankaracharya started the renaissance of vedic religion and culture. For sixteen years, he travelled the entire length and breadth of India. He returned to Kerala once to perform the last rites for his mother and then at the age of thirty-two, he dropped his mortal coil in Kedarnath.

He established *peeths* or centres in four different places in India. The first one is at Joshimath which is on the way to Badrinath. He established four maths and there he trained sannyasins of the Dashnami tradition. All sannyasins were organized into ten different orders like Saraswati, Puri, Bharati, Giri, Vanam, Tirtham. We belong to the Saraswati order, Saraswati meaning those who are related to knowledge, who are scholars. Puri sannyasins are those who live in cities and run ashrams, hospitals, orphanages and schools. Those who live in the mountains belong to the Giri order, the Tirtham order indicates that they live in places of pilgrimage, those who live in the forests are from the Aranyam order. So the distinguishing factor was the place where the sannyasins lived. The Saraswati order was for the sannyasins whose mandate was to spread and preserve knowledge. The Saraswati sannyasins were told to go and spread this knowledge. In this manner, he organized and regulated all the sannyasins into the Dashnami tradition and also established akharas.

After that he had many more disciples, and from among them came another Shankaracharya. His name was not Adi

Shankaracharya, it was just ‘Shankaracharya.’ So there was Shankar and Shankaracharya, both of them were historical figures. The first one was Adi Shankar and the second one was called Abhinav Shankaracharya. The general populace is not aware of the difference between Shankar and Shankaracharya.

Did the second Shankaracharya also leave his body at a young age?

No, he lived for a long time. He was responsible for organizing all the akharas in India. In India we do not have much regard for history. We pay more attention to concrete work and the inspiration and emotion behind it. Who is concerned with who lived where? We do not care that much for dates. It is not that necessary to know who was born at which time. History and dates are not as important as the work accomplished and attainments achieved by people. That is why Indians used to disregard history.

The system by which historical events are remembered and recalled is very different. It is through the medium of a variety of signs and signifying factors that information about these events is maintained. People will say that on the night that Sri Krishna was born, Rohini was dancing in the sky. In the old scriptures, this is the way things are written. You need to be able to understand what is indicated by such information. What it points to is that Sri Krishna was born under the constellation of Rohini. The birth dates of great figures like Sri Krishna are always mentioned by alluding to such signs and not in a straightforward manner.

This is the tradition and practice in India. They do not write the birth date of great men as having been on this date in such-and-such year. They create a little picture about that time – the gods were showering flowers from heaven, the names of the different gods are mentioned. In order to decode this information, you will have to study about which god represented which particular constellation during that period. That will give you the planetary positions and the location

of constellations. The kind of calendar which we follow at present like 1997, 1998 is a recent practice. It is possible that in future another culture will come and this system of calendars will also change. Tomorrow this civilization can change, it is possible that Chinese, Japanese or Russian people will come in, then won't it be natural for them to use their own calendar? It is also possible that they may pay heed to you, and your Vikram Samvat calendar might be adopted by them, then the Gregorian calendar will not be followed. After a few centuries when this calendar is not in use, how will you know about the different tithis, how will you know the date when a particular person was born?

If it is written down that on the day that such a person was born, the constellations in the sky were such that will be a different matter. The position of constellations does not change every day. There are a few constellations which only shift after two hundred years, some return to a particular position only after fifteen hundred years. This indicates that a particular event took place fifteen hundred years ago, not before that. These people do not name the constellations but refer to a particular devata who is associated with that constellation, like Rohini or Krittika. This is the way that people used to indicate different dates and events. The science of astrology or Jyotish shastra explains all this.

During the birth of Jesus Christ, a bright light was seen in the East. Now don't look at this as a holy or religious event but as a practical fact. What was that star or planet? This knowledge will give you the date of Jesus' birth. When Buddha was born, lotuses bloomed in the lake. What does that mean? This is the traditional method of writing history in India. We do not calculate the dates of birth or death of great persons according to the Gregorian or any other calendar because we know that it can lead to confusion or misunderstanding.

It is written in the *Ramayana* that during the battle between Sri Rama and Ravana, the gods showered flowers from

heaven. Does this also indicate something to do with constellations and planets?

Yes, the battle between Sri Rama and Ravana occurred on different tithis and during that time when important warriors from Ravana's family lost their lives, those times were indicated in these poems by different symbols and signs. The constellations and planets in the *Ramayana* are used as indicators or symbols of different events. If you are able to decode their meaning accurately, you can go deep into the history of thousands of years. An American historian, Will Durant, attempted to arrive at a time frame to indicate the period when the Vedas were written by researching into the *Rig Veda* and other Vedas. Many historians and scholars have worked on this issue and they all have their own opinions but Will Durant went one step further. He studied the positions and periods of planets and constellations as well as different eclipses which are mentioned in the mantras of the Vedas.

As per astronomical calculations, those planetary positions and occurrences of the eclipses must have taken place 45,000 years ago. Based on mathematical calculations, astronomers can give exact dates for eclipses which occurred in the past as well as those that will occur in the future. They can also tell whether it was a solar or lunar eclipse. Not just the date of the eclipse but also the exact minute and second can be calculated. So much so that they can tell you that fifteen thousand years from today, at a specific time, an eclipse will be visible in Australia but will not be seen from India.

Based on such calculations, Will Durant said that the time period of the Vedas was approximately 45,000 years ago. He was able to ascertain that a particular mantra in the *Rig Veda* indicates an eclipse which occurred 45,000 years ago. Now tell me, what could the time period be for a scripture which mentions an eclipse which took place 45,000 years ago? In the same way, when you read descriptions of gods and goddesses in the Vedas and Puranas about how they came and were dancing, showering flowers, blowing conches, singing praises, they are all indicative of different planetary constellations in

the sky at that time. Astronomers are able to calculate the date according to this information. This is the system in India because the people in India know that no calendar is fixed. The world is not just four or five thousand years old. It is very ancient, who knows how many civilizations have flourished and become extinct.

Swamiji, there is an episode described in the *Ramayana* when Meghnad used a magic weapon to create darkness during the battle, then Sri Rama used a counter-weapon to dispel that darkness. Could this be related to eclipses as well?

No, it is not necessarily so. The science of weaponry and warfare has existed in every age. In earlier times, there was also the science of mantra which no longer exists because human beings have fallen very low. The smallest difficulty they face causes panic buttons to be triggered. If I call you a fool, you will immediately slap me. Well, I have only called you a fool, what is the big deal about that? What is the need for you to panic and react violently? Today man has become so weak that he flares up at the least provocation. If someone's elderly father, who can neither stand nor sit nor move about without help, passes away, the son cries. He has been liberated, why not think like that?

Man has become so weak that every small incident has a huge impact on his mind. Which is why Prakriti said that such people should not have access to the power of mantra, they should not have the license or else they would create untold problems in the world. People will trouble each other over trifles. If your superior gets upset with you, you will use mantra against him. You will not stop to think whether it is appropriate or not. After all, what did he do? You were also a little wrong and so was he. Today there is a lack of understanding and tolerance. If the woman says something at home, immediately the husband raises his hand. This is our generation. Which is why nature has taken away some powers. The power of pronouncing a curse, the power of mantra has been taken away.

During the time of Sri Rama and Ravana, there used to be mantra shakti which was empowered by gods, goddesses and great people. Through the power of mantra, they had access to many weapons like *agneyastra*, *varunastra* and *vayavyastra*. When Sri Rama was going to Mithila, Vishwamitra had given him these divine weapons. These divine weapons are not those which are stored in a quiver of arrows but are activated through the power of mantras. They used to exist in earlier times. In those days, even curses used to be pronounced on people. When Kali Yuga came, people lost their sense of judgement, their ability to forgive decreased, they became fearful, the expression of hatred became more common, revolt and unrest was on the rise and the slightest provocation set off disproportionate reactions. Our rishis and munis thought that it was unwise to equip such people with loaded rifles. They took away all those powers.

That is why no matter how much sadhana you do, raise your kundalini, perform endless poojas, nothing will bear fruit because that inner strength and power is no more with you. Well, people cannot have a bath without hot water in the cold weather; that is how weak they have become. They cannot keep fasts; they cannot go anywhere on foot. They cannot even walk from here to Deoghar, what do you say to that? When we tell people to stay at the Baba Ashram which is about three kilometres from this place, they say it is too far! They have all become impotent. Shankaracharya walked all the way from Kerala to Kedarnath, then he went from there to Kashmir, from Kashmir back to South India, from there he went on to so many other places. Were there cars in those days? What incredible strength he had!

We have all become very weak and so nature has taken away those extraordinary powers from us. Mantra shakti is an extraordinary power. Granting a boon to someone or cursing them is an extraordinary power. This was an inherent strength in man which nature has taken away. Now you can neither grant anyone a boon nor can you curse them. Mantras are very powerful; they can be used like bullets which are shot

from a gun, but the average person cannot use them now. If you are able to rise above hatred, violence and selfishness, if you can become completely selfless and not attached to any worldly values, perhaps this power might return to you.

This is the reason why in India when you approach a saint or holy man for blessings, you try to gauge whether they have risen above hatred and selfishness or not. After all, what is there in the world? Life and death, friendship and enmity, hope and despair, hatred and love. One must not be affected by these contrary experiences. All this exists in the world, but what do I have to do with it? I must be detached from it. I should have the ability to simply be a witness to everything. Like a witness, I am watching everything, I am not involved in anything like the lotus which lives in the water and yet is not affected by it.

If any saint is able to live like this, he will have the power to either bless or curse you, he can deploy the power of mantra shakti. In the same way, only the eligible persons are endowed with this mantra shakti. Only such people are entitled to receive this mantra shakti who have immense willpower, are not worried or anxious about anything, do not fret about personal matters, are totally carefree and happy with everything and at the same time are so great that joy and sorrow, success and failure do not affect them in the least bit. Not just this, but they should have deep reserves of compassion, sympathy, forgiveness, love and devotion. On seeing a person suffering their heart should melt, they should experience distress when they see a sick person, and if anyone should speak badly to them, they should not get angry. If someone hates you, that should not affect you and if someone praises you, it should go in through one ear and out through the other. But if someone comes and tells you that they are hungry, you should be able to feel that same hunger. Only a person endowed with these stellar qualities is qualified to be the rightful owner of this mantra shakti, one who can bless others, and grant boons to others.

After all, how did Jesus Christ attain this power? He was not at all concerned with what people might think about him.

He was only concerned for those people who were sad, who were poor, those who were helpless and deprived. He never thought about himself. Even when he was crucified, he did not worry about himself but had a concern for those very people who had tortured him. He prayed to god to forgive them. Such great men had the power of mantra. This power came to our ancestors as a legacy when society was not weak and fraught with ills as it is today.

Is this the reason why it is said in the *Ramacharitamanas* that in Kali Yuga chanting the name of god and charity will be the only support and remedy?

The age in which we are living now is Kali Yuga. Some people also refer to it as the Metal Age or the Age of Technology, but traditionally it is called Kali Yuga. For us Kali Yuga is that age during which man's mind has become polluted, he is unable to exercise any control over himself. Despite knowing that something is not good for you, or can even cause problems for you, you are unable to resist it, this is Kali Yuga. The whole world is engulfed in Kali Yuga. People are engaged all day and all night in troubling each other. You watch Star TV, or BBC or CNN or Doordarshan, everywhere you will see people criticizing each other. People have become over-sensitive and touchy; they are not able to bear the slightest things.

Which is why all the saints – whether they are Christian, Hindu or Muslim – talk only about one thing: The only way to redeem oneself is to have compassion for one and all. Swami Sivananda used to say that the foundation of spiritual life should be as strong as the foundation of a building or the basic principles of education. When we go to college we might well study chemistry, but before getting there when we are in primary school, don't we first study the alphabet? In the same way, do not speak of mediation or purification of the soul or god-realization or developing discrimination and detachment. According to Swami Sivananda, the initial teachings of spiritual life begin with *seva*, *prem* and *daan* – serve, love and give.

You are serving your wife and children. What is so great about that? It is what everyone does. Learn how to serve others. You love your wife and children, you give them everything, but this is not love and giving. Give to others, love others. After completing this primary class, you can think about starting on the higher spiritual classes like purification of the soul, meditation and god-realization. If you skip this primary class and jump straight into the class on purification of the soul, you will hurt yourself and your personality will suffer. In order to attain the divine in this age, the most easy and simple way is that of service, love and giving. Everyone must do this, but in reality it is not so easy to do. Even if I tell you to do so, you won't do it.

When I was in Rishikesh, though I knew what I am telling you now, I did not do it either. I could give lectures on service, love and giving. I used to do a little bit of it as well, but only because it was Swami Sivanandaji's instruction. I created a colony for people suffering from leprosy and did a fair amount of work for them, but I did not have any particular interest in that work. Guruji gave an instruction and I followed it, that's all. Even in Munger, I knew about all this but I was not able to bring it to fruition. When I came to Rikhia I had a real experience of it, everything became crystal clear. The most important thing in spiritual life is to live for others, to spend money on others, to think and care about others and to bring happiness into the lives of others. You understand what I am saying, don't you?

Seva, prem and daan – out of these three, seva is possible for everyone. If someone is sick, they can be served, but giving or daan is not possible for everyone. If someone is very poor, he has nothing, not even enough to eat, then how will he be able to give?

Every person is capable of giving, even the poorest of the poor can give. If you have two rotis, give one to me. It would be better if you went without food on that day and give both rotis. Anyway, that is not real giving, it would be called

sacrifice. What I mean to say is that even a poor person can share whatever little he has and a rich person can give much, much more. Do not use soap for one month, don't smoke cigarettes for a month, don't have a drink for a month – in this way you can save and collect that money to give away in charity. I just gave you a few examples, you can also think of other ways to do this. Save at least five or six hundred rupees and send it to either a person or an organization which is involved in philanthropy. You can also give that amount to an orphanage or a hospital.

This year we are buying a thousand tricycles for handicapped children. Next year we will start another program. The new building, we have made in Tapovan is for widows. The widows in our panchayat have nowhere to go. After the death of their husbands they are thrown out of their homes, they wash dishes somewhere, do some odd jobs here and there, they are illiterate and helpless. We will employ these women here for eight hours a day. What will be their work? To do japa or write mantra or read the *Ramacharitamanas* – these three jobs. The literate women will read for eight hours a day, the illiterate women will do japa of either *Om* or *Sri Rama* or *Om Namah Shivaya*. Those who can write a little will be given paper to do *likhit japa*, mantra writing of *Om*. In the evening they will be given a daily wage. The daily wage for working in the fields for a labourer is about thirty to forty rupees, that is what we will be giving here for doing japa and chanting mantras. If they cannot come for eight hours but only can manage four hours, they will receive half a day's wage. If they say that they can only come for one hour, they will receive an hour's wages.

Women have a very deprived position in our society and the situation for widows is the worst. All kinds of incorrect things are said about them. If a man becomes a widower, he continues to wear the same clothes as before, but as soon as a woman is widowed she is forced to wear only white. Isn't this wrong? Shouldn't the same rule apply to men as well? When the same rules do not apply to everyone, it is called injustice.

That is why I feel that we have a responsibility towards this section of society. We are starting this project in a big way from Makar Sankranti next year. Initially we will start with one hundred widows. We have received many requests, but on a trial basis we will start with one hundred. How they will work, what they will wear, how many women will be needed, how many rounds of japa they will do, all this will have to be decided. Swami Niranjan is very happy with this project and so am I. Everyone wants young women but who cares about the widows? Well, that is something we shall do, later even other people will be inspired to do this.

We are giving tricycles here, in the cities there are so many Marwari institutions and temples, which can give cycles to the handicapped. It is not as if only we can give, everyone can. After all, the cost is about two thousand rupees. Can't a person take some money out of his pocket? Let every mother in every house think about it, let every young person think about it, at least let every little child in the home think about doing some good, give a cycle to a handicapped person. Don't go to the cinema for a few days, don't buy Coca-Cola, the amount will be available on its own.

It is very important to awaken compassion for others in the minds of the young and old, men and women, otherwise one day we will all be killed, there will be social anarchy. Everyone will turn into a looter. Mark my words, your homes will be looted in broad daylight. After all, when a society breaks down, revolution is inevitable, isn't it? So how much difference will it make to you if you spend a couple of thousand rupees on buying a cycle? We have decided that we are giving a thousand cycles, and they have started coming.

In this way, there should be a thought in the minds of everyone to do some good for others in some way or the other. To do good for others is man's first duty in this age. Whether it is by educating someone or buying medicines or helping a handicapped person; helping in whatever way possible is the dharma for everyone. For those who are wealthy and have plenty, this becomes their primary duty. All traders,

shopkeepers, all Marwaris, all rich people should think along these lines. The priests in temples should also think about it. Temples have a lot of funds at their disposal. They can easily give cycles to all the handicapped persons in Deoghar. After all, is Shiva only in the temple or is he present everywhere and in everyone?



Satsang 20

24 November 1997

On the fourth of December in the evening at 5.15 pm, at the time of *godhuli*, the marriage of Sita will take place, and on the occasion of this marriage we have invited Shiva. Shiva has promised Sri Rama that he will definitely be present during Sri Rama's marriage. I thought he had already made the promise, all I have to do is remind him of that promise and invite him. That is why all the kirtans and bhajans which will be sung here are going to be dedicated to Shiva. 'Jai Jai Shiva Bhole Bhandari' is the main bhajan of this Sita Kalyanam celebration. Like it was naam kirtan last year, this year it will be this one. I had composed this bhajan in 1944, over fifty years ago and since then, this bhajan has been sung. This year we have invited many people to come to Rikhia. There will be discourses by learned scholars, Purushottam Jalota will be singing kirtans and the yoginis from South India will conduct the yajna.

The place where all of you are seated now is called Tapovan, and it was built with a specific *sankalpa*, resolve. From time to time, I receive divine mandates, which are called *akashvani* in the language of the Puranas, and it is these mandates which direct my life. Two years ago, I had gifted bridal kits to the newly-wed brides in this area and that went off very well. It is not as if I was the only one who had this idea, but many other people were also inspired. Not just in India but people from all over the world, whether they were Hindu or Muslim, Christian or atheists, they all came and many gifts were also sent. Now every year when the brides go to their husband's home, they take these gifts as prasad along

with them. This year there has been a flood of gifts. Someone sent fifty suitcases, some sent the most beautiful sarees from all over India, others sent silver and gold jewellery. People from Greece and France brought the sixteen items for adornment called *solah shringar*. This year the work of giving has doubled. The new brides coming to this panchayat as well as the brides from here who are going to their husband's homes are both going to receive this prasad. They will be approximately six hundred in all. I was thinking that if there were more, it would be even better.

***Satkarma* – good deeds**

This is called *satkarma*. What is *satkarma*? Dharma. What is dharma? Connecting with the divine and connecting with humanity is dharma. Experiencing a feeling of unity with others is dharma. You should feel that these girls are your own daughters and your own daughters-in-law. You will be witness to this on the evening of the 4th of December. All the newly-wed brides will come here and receive their bridal gifts. Women are the most precious members in society. I was born from a woman; you were also born from a woman. She was your first guru. She was the first one who took care of you. She was your first lover. Perhaps even your second, who knows! That is why it is our duty to honour and care for all women, and this is the purpose of conducting the Sita Kalyanam program.

The second thing is that the hall in which you are seated right now has not been built for satsangs. Today we are inaugurating it and next year from Makar Sankranti very good work will be taking place here. One hundred widows from this area who have no means of livelihood will come here every morning, work all day and leave in the evening. They will receive the wage which a labourer is given. What work will they be doing all day? Those who are illiterate will chant the Mahamantra, those who can read and write a little bit will do *likhit japa* or mantra writing, they will write *Ram Ram* in notebooks, hundreds and thousands of *Ram Ram*. We will keep those notebooks very safely. When you want to build a

house, come and take ten copies from me and put them into the foundation of your house. The name of the lord will be the foundation of your house. Those widows who are literate will read the *Ramacharitamanas* in the room downstairs. They will be paid according to the number of hours that they do this work.

For the first year, we have arranged this to be done by one hundred women. This is just the beginning, if god so wishes we may be able to take care of everyone.

*Jaan ko deta, ajaana ko deta, jahaan ko deta, tumhein vahi
daihein;*

*Kahe ko soch kare man moorakha, jin chonch diye tin choon bhi
daihein.*

He gives to the known and the unknown, he gives to the whole world and it is he who gives you too; Why do you worry, you silly soul? The one who gave you a beak will also provide the feed.

The divine feeds all creatures, nourishes the entire creation and also looks after you. The number of one hundred is just a small beginning. You all should make a resolve that one day all the widows in this area will receive support. It is not that they should become wealthy. I don't even like wealth very much. You have to make a resolve that the widows in this area will be able to afford two square meals a day. This is satkarma and it is the primary class of spiritual life. This is the A-B-C-D of spirituality, Vedanta, Samkhya, yoga, Islam, Christianity and vedic religion. No religion will be worth heeding until its first lesson, its first teaching is that of satkarma, doing good. Don't think about kundalini yoga, don't think about Vedanta and *Aham Brahmasmi*, instead think about what good work you can do to help others. Not for your wife-child-brother-sister or for yourself, no, but think about someone with whom you have no relationship. That is satkarma; that is seva.

My Guru used to tell me, 'Satyananda! If you wish to scale the heights of spiritual life, you must first enrol in the

primary class.’ Do not start thinking of going straight to the college of spirituality. First study the alphabet, then learn words, learn to write sentences, then study grammar. Only after you master this will you be eligible to enter the classes of literature, science, etc. If you go straight to college and tell Swami Niranjana to teach you kundalini yoga, then you are also foolish and if he agrees to teach you, so is he. The field has not been prepared and you want to start planting seeds! Seva is the first, *prem* or love is the second and *daan* or giving is the third lesson of spiritual life. Only after completing these three can you go on to the purification of the soul, meditation and god-realization.

We also have a scheme for handicapped children. I have told Swami Niranjana to order a thousand tricycles for the handicapped children in this area. Not a single handicapped child in this panchayat will be without a tricycle. They will be able to go to school and even go to work with that tricycle.

This is the dharma, responsibility and duty of mankind. Apart from fulfilling your social responsibility, you do not have any other religious or dharmic duty. Society does not only mean the society of your country but the whole world. After all, what is the definition of family and society? Only husband, wife and two children?

*Ayamnijahaparovetigananaalaghuchetasam;
Udaaracharitanaam to vasudhaivakutumbakam.*

This is mine, that is yours – this is how people with narrow or small hearts think. But for those whose hearts are big and expansive, the whole world is like their own family.

This is the founding principle of spiritual life as well. I have received a lot of support from the villagers here, whether they were women or children or the headman of the village. Without local support, it is not possible to accomplish anything. Money is not everything. There was a lack of support for this kind of good work in Munger. Yes, it was different in relation to yoga. If it was not for the support received in Munger, it would have been impossible for the

establishment and growth of Bihar School of Yoga to have taken place. The support given by the people of Munger and the encouragement received by the people from the West are the two main reasons behind the success of Bihar School of Yoga. The kind of work that I am talking about now could not have been done in Munger.

There I would ask for ten houses to be built and people would simply put that money into their own pockets. Here people don't do that. At one time, we had initiated an education scheme in Munger and sponsored four hundred students' education in schools and colleges. Out of these, half were boys and the other half were girls. The headmen of the villages and even the government officials colluded in producing fake admission letters. The students were not listed in the school records, but the stipend used to be collected in their names. That is why I had to stop that scheme. Later we started the repair of tube wells. Even there we faced similar problems. I thought that society is not ready to support these philanthropic projects, it would be better to leave them to their fate.

In Deoghar and particularly in Rikhia panchayat, the people have a lot of enthusiasm and express their desire to support such work. We have a *goshala*, a place for rearing and sheltering cows, and people from the neighbourhood come every morning and offer their seva. The headman of the panchayat has decided that on one day four people from this village will come, the next day from another village. In this way, they have a whole system in place. People from every village come and offer their seva in the goshala. When people are so willing to come forward and help you, it also becomes your duty to help them as well. You all know how much trouble there is with electricity in Bihar! There is such irregular electricity supply in Munger and in Deoghar, but even though this place is away from Deoghar, we have no problem with electricity because we have the support and goodwill of the local people. They want this place to have electricity.

Upliftment of women

The bridal kits for the newly-wed brides from here are all prepared but I asked, what about those brides who have come to homes from Bihar? The reply was that they have not been listed yet. Yesterday I caught hold of the headman and asked him to prepare a list. Now we have got that list and everyone is running around to organize the *prasad*. I have told them that silver and gold are essential when a girl is getting married, just some sweets and samosas will not do! Those will be fine for Sri Rama but this is going to be a part of Sita's dowry, and I believe that wherever Lakshmi goes, a suitcase full of goodies accompanies her. No girl has ever entered your home empty-handed, she came as Lakshmi and you have turned her into a servant. What a travesty this is! All the social rules and regulations are for Lakshmi but none for yourself! When she is widowed, she has to change her attire. She is prohibited from attending auspicious occasions, this is the social rule, but when a man becomes a widower, he struts around all over the place wearing a coat and trousers, there are no restrictions for him.

When there is a difference in rules, that is called injustice. This is outright injustice against women. If there is a rule, it should apply equally to both men and women. If women are forced to wear only white, give up all their jewellery and are forbidden from applying *tika* and attending auspicious ceremonies, then the same restrictions should apply to men. Only then will we accept these rules. This is what my mind says.

That very Lakshmi who did not come to your home empty-handed but brought plenty and auspiciousness with her, she brought gold and silver, scooter and motorcycle but she ends up washing dirty dishes! If she chooses to do so of her own free will, that is another matter, but one cannot behave with one's mother, wife or daughter in the same way that you treat your son. Boys are like iron rods, you can put them anywhere but a girl is like gold, she should be treasured. In social life, there are always restrictions placed on valuables. I am not

against those rules, but I am talking about respect and about a particular mind-set. I have always emphasized this point and even today I say that our girls must receive full respect in society. All of us elders will have to sit down together and introspect upon this issue. All rights and privileges for us and nothing for them? That is not fair. A man can make a mistake and he is readily forgiven but if a girl does so, she is never forgiven, what justice is this? You can forgive a man for any number of transgressions, but a girl is made to pay for a little mistake!

***Ramacharitamanas* – a guarantee for prosperity**

A rose is a symbol of fragrance, moonlight is a symbol of coolness, the sun signifies heat, water signifies life, in the same manner *Ramacharitamanas* is a symbol of auspiciousness. Having it in the home will bring auspiciousness. If people are able to understand this, they will definitely read the *Ramacharitamanas*. The widows in our area who are practically waiting to leave this world are also reading it. This is something which the cultured people of our country will have to learn. The *Ramacharitamanas* is the medium for literacy. This brings double benefits. Literacy comes and along with it man embarks on the path of fulfilling his duties as well. Until there is a tussle between fulfilling duties and shirking them, man cannot make a decision between the two. Only when we have the knowledge of good and bad can we make the right decisions.

The *Ramacharitamanas* is a poem of dharma, a book of dharma and a beautiful example of our Indian way of life. This must be taught to our boys and girls and they should learn it when they are young. Their parents should also learn to read it so that the family can sit down and read it together. This activity which we have started here has taken off with full force. Now we have a problem. The villagers ask us to give them the big volume which has the meaning as well so that they can understand it better. The Gita Press bookshop in Deoghar has been emptied, they say there are no more copies

left in the shop! I said, order more from somewhere. That is how much interest has developed in the *Ramacharitamanas*!

When Sati reincarnated as Parvati and was married to Shiva, one day she said to him, "In my last life, my head was a bit topsy-turvy and I doubted Sri Rama's divinity. Now it has sorted itself out so please tell me the story of Sri Rama. The different episodes of Sri Rama's life: when Sage Vishwamitra came to take him to his ashram, how Sri Rama killed Tadaka, how he liberated Ahilya, the way he broke the bow in Mithila, how Parshurama's honour was threatened, the way in which Sri Rama went into exile, tell me about all these events." At that time, Shiva recites a beautiful quatrain, 'Sakal lok jaga paavani Ganga; poochhe hoon Ragupati katha prasanga.' He says that the events in Sri Rama's life are like the holy Ganga. After emerging from Gangotri, the Ganga comes to Rishikesh, then to Haridwar, then she goes to Prayag, these are the different places along her route. Exactly like that, these events plot Sri Rama's journey. It is your wish whether you choose to worship Sri Rama or not, but you should definitely listen to his stories because this is a story about a person who, despite being god and being endowed with all the power that a god has, lived like an ordinary man. One who is all-powerful, when he incarnated as a man and behaved like a man, that is called living within the boundaries or *maryada*. At that time, if he acted like an all-powerful being, that would not be called *maryada*. These boundaries are personal and familial, social and national.

When Shiva said this to Parvati, you must believe that when you read the *Ramacharitamanas* every day, you are bringing the flow of the holy river Ganga into your home. Along with that, the literacy campaign of the Indian Government will also flourish. Two birds with one stone! After all, you only have to read it, that's all. Studying about who Shahjehan's daughter was or what was the name of Aurangzeb's son was of no use to me. What I learnt in the twelve years I spent in my guru's ashram was of use to me. I have forgotten all about history, I have discarded all knowledge of geography but each and

every little thing I learned from my Guruji is of great help to my life today.

Ramacharitamanas will bring you wealth and your roof will cave in with showers of gold – this is not what I can guarantee to you. I can assure you that the *Ramacharitamanas* will bring prosperity into your home and household. What is the meaning of prosperity? Today there is one flower on the rose bush, tomorrow there will be two, the day after there will be three – that is called prosperity. First you build a small little house for yourself, the next year you build a toilet, the following year you add a septic tank, then you make another room. One year you have a wood-fire stove; the next year you bring a gas stove. This is called prosperity. Prosperity makes a man humble, polite and keeps him within acceptable boundaries. He recognizes his weaknesses and limitations, but when wealth showers in through the roof it makes man mad. Where there is wealth, bad habits and indulgences follow, all struggles end and man becomes foolish. This is a fact. If you don't believe, ask the wealthy.

There is no one more foolish than rich people. Please don't mind what I am saying, there are many rich people sitting here, but I speak frankly that wealth puts an end to struggles. Anyone who becomes rich also becomes arrogant. There are the occasional exceptions, but generally this is what one finds. That is why there should not be affluence and wealth but prosperity. The guarantee of bringing prosperity into the home is with the *Ramacharitamanas*. I am not saying that your coffers will be overflowing or that you will have a huge mansion with a dozen cars parked on the porch, but there will be happiness and joy for sure.

Satsang 21

15 December 1997

Swamiji, what was it that made you think about conducting the Sita Kalyanam program?

I don't think about anything on my own, my dear, in fact I do not think at all! My thinking machine has been disabled, it does not work anymore. No, I hear divine messages and I act upon those instructions. Tomorrow if god tells me to move out of here, I will leave immediately, what more is there to it? There is no point in thinking about anything. I have had a lot of thoughts in my life. For sixty to seventy years all I did was think a lot, make schemes and formulate programs. Now I feel that, no, regardless of whether someone is rich or poor, everyone is unhappy. The wealthy are also unhappy and so are the poor. People who are unhealthy and ailing are unhappy, people who are healthy are also unhappy. The problems and strife I have seen people face here in India are not any less than what I have seen people facing in the west. There is no dearth of problems there. The only difference is that here people cry in huts and there they cry in houses. That is the only difference. Here people who lose their mental equilibrium are seen wandering in the streets and there they are seen in asylums. Man does not know the reason why he is unhappy. The poor man thinks if I become rich I will be happy. Even after amassing wealth, the unhappiness still persists. The real question is how to find a solution that will end this sorrow, how can man become happy?

Many saints and mahatmas have shown different paths. The Jain saints have shown their path, Buddha showed

his path, Shankaracharya advocated the path of Vedas and Puranas, but man is not really able to understand any of this. After all, Buddha did show the way and many thousands of people became Buddhist but even after that, they were not able to remain happy all the time. Jesus Christ also showed the way, people became Christians but no one found lasting happiness. You get what I am saying? The final key to happiness still continues to elude everyone. Then what is the way?

The priest who serves Lord Jagannath all day and all night also cries. There is sorrow in his house, worries and anxieties, weeping and troubles, isn't there? Even in Gangotri where people go to find moksha and Badrinath where they go to have darshan of the divine, don't the priests there also cry? Do they not experience sorrow and troubles? Are they free from illusions and attachments? Are they not affected by superstitions and arrogance? There is no happiness anywhere, neither in these places of pilgrimage nor by listening to sermons, yet everyone is constantly yearning for happiness. If you leave your dog outside on the verandah, when he feels cold he will find his way inside and crawl under your cot. He also seeks some comfort. Vedanta says that complete freedom from sorrow and attaining total happiness is the goal of all souls.

Not all saints and mahatmas attain total happiness. As long as man works with an aim to attain some result or fruit, there will definitely be unhappiness. No one finds one hundred percent fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations. Sri Rama and Sri Krishna showed that when the divine incarnates in a human body with the support of Prakriti or nature, even they are subject to and dependent upon the laws of nature. They also have to obey the laws of nature. Nature is subject to decay and degeneration whereas the divine is eternal, unchanging. When divine beings who are eternal come within the ambit of the perishable nature, tamoguna manifests in them as well, and they cry. There is tragedy in the lives of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, from the beginning until the very end. What

happiness did Sita enjoy, what joy did Sri Rama really have? When man accepts the fact that sorrow is an integral part of life just like there is a shadow behind the light, only then will happiness be found. There will be sorrow, it is an undeniable, unavoidable, inescapable and inevitable reality and yet no one wants unhappiness. This is the biggest mistake. No man wishes to die, no one wants to suffer any loss, everyone wants success and profit, everyone wants praise and adulation. Well, that is the only reason for unhappiness, nothing else. You do not want unhappiness, that is why you are unhappy. Saints and mahatmas have nothing to do with joy or sorrow, they are fine in whatever condition they are, everything is okay, everything is acceptable to them.

Today the Western world is turning towards the East with great speed. In twenty years' time, all the good doctors and therapists will come and work here. They will bring all their modern technology and equipment and come. This is the face of the coming age. There will not only be government or nationalized banks but international banks will also come to India. They will come with such force that all of you will be banking with them soon. The government cannot prevent this from happening. Those days are gone when we could say that this will not come to our country and that will not come to our country. People's mind-sets are changing. People say we will buy whatever we want from anywhere we like. Nationalism is a stream of political thought in economics but in reality there is no such thing as nationalism. Knowledge goes beyond the boundaries of politics and the limits of national borders. Biology is not western; yoga is not eastern. Knowledge and science have always been universal.

In the same way, all those things which are used by everyone everywhere like banks, universities, educational institutions, they are all universal. No one can say that this cannot come here or you cannot go there. Why should it not come here? Either improve the working of your banks or exit from the arena. A government which cannot provide amenities and facilities to its people has no right to speak

about political philosophy, regardless of whether it is socialist, communist or capitalist. If the government is not able to reach the people, it has no business talking philosophy. Go and see the state of the neighbouring villages, there is not even a torch or a lantern in those homes, what kind of government is this? The daily wage they have fixed for labourers is thirty rupees. Nowadays who can make ends meet with such a measly sum?

Even a hundred rupees is nothing. Labourers should receive at least three or four hundred rupees a day. After all, they are also human beings, they also have wishes and hopes, they also have needs. When they go to the doctor's clinic, does he charge them differently or reduced fees? All the patients have to pay the same fees, isn't it? Everyone's sickness is the same. When you go to school, the fees are the same. You go to a shop, the price which you pay for a saree will be the same for a labourer. Come on, he is poor, charge him a lower rate, there is no law like that or is there? Then why is he paid a lower wage?

We want a good and prosperous country, not a political one. Don't you agree with that? You should shake hands with the man who is your driver. After all, why can't we shake his hand? Why can't our servant sit down and have a cup of tea with us? This feeling of social superiority and inferiority will only go away when each person receives his or her own respectful and rightful position in society. Unless that happens, all this talk of political philosophy is pure nonsense.

The western culture is primarily a culture of traders and shopkeepers. Wherever there is a profit to be made, they will rush to that place. The Indian market has been relatively untouched so far. If the Indian population of ninety crores is divided into ten crore families, only a few will have purchasing power. The others do not have that capacity. The trading community has a credo which aims to increase the buying capacity of its consumers. Unless the consumer has the money to spend, good trade is not possible. When you pay your labourers a wage of three or four hundred rupees, then he can buy goods worth that amount. The market depends

upon his ability to spend money. Here these people have nothing. Nobody in the villages has any money. Aren't there impoverished villages in Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh? These people have absolutely nothing in their huts. The women sleep on rags which they stitch together into tattered quilts. I have been to their homes, I have lived with the poor. Sannyasins should live with the poor and take money from the rich. I am speaking very directly here.

The only way to earn money is that it should be one world, only one market. In India you should be free to buy goods from Madras, from Deoghar and from Bhubhaneswar. There is one market, you can buy what you wish from anywhere. Is there a law which can prevent you from doing this? No. Then why are there rules that prevent you from buying things from England or from Japan or China? This will have to break. When these rules are done away with, then you will see that the markets will become so strong that they will not be able to manage them. The main reason for poverty is closed markets and when markets are restricted, the prices rise. Open up the market, the prices will drop.

I believe that we are quite lazy. If we have enough to eat at this point in time, we will go to sleep. That is why we are poor.

What you are saying is right up to a point, but I believe that laziness is the result of our social structure. As of now, there is no place for struggle in our social fabric. Those races which have struggled, they cannot sit still. You do not wish to fight with me, I do not wish to fight with you either, but war is inevitable. If there will not be any wars in the next thirty to forty years, the entire economy will be shaken. War changes cultures and civilizations, it changes the balance of power, it creates a shift in economies. After all, medical science developed in leaps and bounds during the two World Wars. War, which we all say should not take place, is essential for society, for the country and for the world. How did the girls in countries like England progress in the way they have? The

First and Second World War took place in Europe. The Second World War was massive; I don't know whether you remember it or not. Lakhs of young men from Germany, France, Italy and England were killed, only the aged and babies left at home. Women had to come out of the homes and into the work space. Just look at their position today, it is formidable! There is no difference between men and women there. The reason for all this was the wars.

Wars destroy some things and bring new things in their place. If the World Wars had not taken place, the United Nations would not have been formed. Wars take place to address a lack which exists in society. Until the Second World War, the British ruled the world. The war created a flip and America emerged as the next centre of power. The next time there is a war, who knows? Maybe it will shift and move over in this direction.

Our country was so prosperous, now it is fallen so low.

The country was known as the 'Golden Hind' and is now in such a terrible state. The main reason for this decline is keeping women away from social participation. Here women have a role to play in the family but not in society. This is one point. The other is women's education. The social rules and conventions which apply to women have to be based on practicality and immediate reality. The rules of conduct which we impose on women should also be obeyed by men. When a woman is widowed, she changes her mode of dressing, her bangles are broken, whereas if a man becomes a widower, within a month he remarries! Why are there such different rules for men and women?

Unless and until women's participation in society is one hundred percent this society will not be able to prosper. If you are an educated woman, go and become a doctor or an engineer or a lecturer, earn your own living. Employ a girl who has done her matriculation to look after your home. She will cook for you, answer the telephone, take care of your children and their going to and coming from school.

You go and work as a lecturer in a college, earn ten or twelve thousand rupees and pay her two or three thousand rupees. Now women only carry the children on their hips and bicker throughout the day. Engage a baby-sitter, even that girl who has passed her matriculation exam will get a job. If you wish to eradicate poverty, this is the only way.

But under those circumstances, love becomes less between parents and children.

Look here, there are two things. Either you look after your money or your children.

But we want the love of our children. In foreign countries with the baby-sitter culture, there is no mental peace.

Well, then I suppose poverty is all right. Where is the mental peace in India? So many people who are mentally disturbed come to us. There is no mental peace here either, the only difference is that there the mentally ill are counted because of the census, but here we cannot tell who is mentally ill. This problem of mental illness is universal. We say that the root of all problems is *moha*. To some extent, *moha*, infatuation or attachment, is a social necessity which keeps you and me tied together like beads on a string. After a point, *moha* becomes negative or destructive and the reason for sorrow. If you are either my mother, my sister or my daughter, it is not necessary for us to be always together or constantly in touch. If we are brother and sister, it is enough that we acknowledge this relationship, that's all. I do not believe that it is necessary to go beyond this. A child needs its mother until a certain age, the son needs his father until a certain age. The love between brother and sister lasts for a certain time and then they have to go their own separate ways. The relationship between a husband and wife is of a certain kind for a period of time and then that relationship also takes on a different form. Until a certain age she is a partner, sometimes she plays the role of a mother, at other times she fulfils the part of a guide as well.

Without the relationship, the 108 beads of the mala will fall apart, I am willing to accept that, but relationships have been made so constricting in our society that it feels like that is all there is, nothing else exists apart from these relationships. As far as the western world goes, I am not saying that it is an ideal society, but as far as relationships go, they are able to maintain them. Even if the man has divorced his wife, he will send her greetings and flowers on her birthday. And so will she.

But what about the children?

Well, the condition of the children is the same everywhere. So many children roam the streets here as well, so many can be seen on Sealdah station, they are homeless. There are thousands of such children all over the world. In foreign countries they are less visible since the governments have institutions where they can find food and shelter. Here they end up stealing. So many of them sleep on railway platforms and work in tea shops. It is the same story everywhere, whether it is Asia, Africa or Latin America and even in China they have a similar situation. Yes, it is less in Japan but there are a lot of drug addicts and youth with a criminal bent of mind. The difference is that there they manage to get two meals a day whereas here that is not the case.

Any society, whether it is in the West or here in India, is never totally blameless. Now it depends entirely on you as to which society you regard as better – one which is prosperous or one which places more emphasis on relationships, one which believes that the only purpose of a girl's life is to get married. Balance is what is needed, but this balance is lacking, here as well as in the West. I speak with those people a lot. They also do not want marriages to break up, no one wants that, but they say that it is just not possible to stay together. They tell me, 'Yes, Swamiji. We totally agree with the fact that we should not leave each other, but what to do? Life has become a living hell. It is just not possible to stay together, we can't bear to look at each other in the house'. If he says something,

she snaps back; if she says something, he shouts back. If this is the condition, what will they do? It also happens in India.

Here the wife accepts.

Because she has to, she has no choice. If she leaves the house, where can she go? She cannot go to her mother's house. Even those people accept that there should be stability in relationships, but they cannot understand this system of the parents deciding upon the man whom their daughter will marry. Neither can I understand it! The practice of *swayamvar* in which a girl chooses her own groom has been prevalent for eons in our society. The advent of our brothers from across the borders into our country over the last three to four hundred years has put an end to it even though the fact is that this has been a very old practice. It was completely accepted and respected that a girl has the right to choose her own husband. That is fine but then the question arises that are the girls in a position to make an intelligent and informed choice? If she is educated, is a graduate, teaches in a college then yes, she is mature, she has seen the world and is capable of taking a proper decision. A girl who has never stepped out of the house, how can she make a proper choice? She knows nothing about people, she is totally unaware that there can also be crooks or bad persons in the world. That is why it is absolutely essential for girls to have a good education and an awareness of the world, then she can make a good choice. I do not believe that parents need to worry too much about their children's marriage.

Swamiji, won't change take place on its own when education comes in?

No, it is necessary to also tell all of you that our social conditions have to change in order to keep pace with the changing times. There are provisions for such change within our vedic culture. Remember Vishwamitra? He was a rishi, wasn't he? Even he fathered a daughter and society accepted that. Rishi Kanva adopted that girl, Shakuntala, and brought

her up in his ashram but she fell in love with King Dushyanta. She not only fell in love with him but also conceived his child, but when Rishi Kanva came to know about it, he said that it was all right since she had already had a gandharva marriage. Later he sent Shakuntala to Dushyanta.

Any society which is unable to adapt to the changing times, seasons and culture becomes extinct. When summer comes, you will shed your sweaters and in the winter put them on again. In the same manner, society needs to be able to 'dress according to season'. During the time when there were invasions from outsiders, it was all right to keep womenfolk in the house for their protection. I am willing to accept that. In today's times that kind of system is redundant and we have to bring our girls out. They must learn how to fend for themselves, they should be capable of being their own guardians and protectors. Until a girl cannot look after herself properly, she will keep making mistakes. If you wish that she stops making mistakes, she should become her own guardian and know how to protect herself. After the age of eighteen, a girl can look after herself. The genetic make-up of each person says that the switch in the brain to protect oneself is turned on after the age of eighteen.

The only reason for the backward state of our country is that 50% of our society has been completely handicapped, as if one tyre of the car is punctured. That's all, nothing else. Uplift the position of women in relation to education as well as socially, the country will certainly rise to great heights. They should go to the cities from the villages, travel everywhere, stay in hostels – that way they will come to know about the different kinds of people who make up society, they will be able to tell the difference between those who are sattvic, rajasic and tamasic or crooks, mafia, kidnappers, only then will they learn how to recognize all this and become aware of how to protect themselves. Otherwise somebody may run off with them, there is nothing to prevent that from happening.

The second thing is that there will have to be a legal provision to protect their share of the property. There

should be a law whereby when they go to their in-law's house, property should be in their name. She will bring a dowry from her parents' home and they must make sure they give it as well. I do not agree with all this talk about banning dowry. It is an unnatural, incorrect and false idea which is only promoted for political ends. The best thing is that a girl's share should be handed over to her on the day of her wedding so that there is no problem with the brothers later on. Like two measures of land can be made over to her and put in her name. In our old scriptures and texts like the *Narada Samhita* and *Garga Samhita*, there are detailed instructions and guidelines on the rights of daughters and girls. She is not going to carry off the field on her head when she gets married! She will take silver and gold. In a girl's dowry, she must have silver, gold, expensive clothes and jewellery, there should be a rule to ensure all this. This is her rightful share and she must get it from her parents' house. Now since there is a law prohibiting dowry, girls will demand their share from their father's property. If you do not give your daughter her rightful share, then she will definitely demand it.

The words *dahej* and dowry are incorrect. There is a Sanskrit word *daay*, which means right, that which one gets from another. It is this word, *daay*, which makes the word *sampradaaya*, like *sannyasa sampradaya* or community. *Daay* means that which is received as inheritance from the previous generation. So the word, *daaybhaag*, has been corrupted into *dahej* and is called dowry in English. In reality, this is the girl's rightful share.

Usually the husband's family demands dowry, isn't it?

They cannot demand or even ask for it. There is a law related to it. There is a law called *streedhan*. This *streedhan* can only be spent by the woman. It is the word of the scriptures. When our daughter gets married and goes to her in-law's home with twenty or twenty-five tolas of gold, that wealth belongs to her. That is not meant to be given to the husband but kept by the woman to spend as she wishes. Then it will either go to her

daughter or her daughter-in-law, not to her son. According to the vedic scriptures and dharma, which you all refer to as Hinduism today, streedhan is sacrosanct and cannot be touched by anybody else. This streedhan can only go to another woman, either to the daughter or daughter-in-law, or to the paternal or maternal granddaughter. This law has existed since time immemorial and now it is being violated. It is required that one thinks about how this can be revived. There will have to be legislation as well as trust and faith.

We were talking about poverty. Poverty will not disappear by waving a magic wand, but this poverty can be taken away by women. In our spiritual scriptures, the woman is considered to be a form of the Goddess Lakshmi. The son's wife is considered to be Lakshmi, isn't she? How do we treat her? When she first steps into our house, she is laden with so much, bank drafts, jewellery. If she comes from a big family, she may bring a car, scooter, TV, video as well. How do we treat her? We make her wash all the dishes and clothes, get her to press our feet, we even beat her – this is the way in which we treat our Lakshmi!

You went empty-handed to her house, like a beggar, and she entered your home like Lakshmi – and this is how you behave with her! If the slightest stain sullies her, she is called unchaste and as a man, you have been born with the indelible stamp of purity! Amazing! How can this kind of society work? Such a society can never become prosperous. If you want society to prosper, first of all men and woman must be given equal positions. This will happen. It is inevitable. You will not be able to do anything about it, these are the winds of change which will blow. Over the first thirty to forty years of the next century, this will definitely take place. This is the law of time. No rule, no power, no matter how strong or unconquerable it might be, will not last forever. Time sweeps everything into its bosom – *kaalo jayati sarvadaa*. The Christian faith was so strong but over the last century, one by one, many sadhus and sannyasins brought vedic ideas to the fore. The first was Swami Vivekananda, then came Swami Sivananda, Swami

Bhaktivedanta. I also shaved the heads of many people, gave them new names, put a tilak on their foreheads. Time is such a force that brings even the greatest to their knees.

There will come a time when women will rise high and we will have to work hand in hand with them. Women here have been independent and capable since the very beginning but when the foreign invaders came, they brought their desert culture with them, their mountain culture and began to impose it upon us. One has to follow the culture of the ruler, isn't it? We had to accept it. By and by over three to four hundred years, a lot of changes took place, and when the British came things changed again. Now in the times to come, the whole world is going to become alike.

Communion of faith

In the tantras, woman is considered to be divine. Kaulachara tantra is followed in Bengal and Mithila in which the daughter is initiated by her mother, meaning that mother is the guru. This Kaulachara tantra was prevalent in Bengal, Mithila and Orissa. It also had a very respected position in Assam. In tantra shastra, Orissa is referred to as *Udiyaanpeeth*. There are three peeths in tantra, and Udiyanpeeth is one among those. The culture in Orissa, Bengal and Mithila is strongly influenced by tantra.

This time during Sita Kalyanam we also had a Christian Mass. Three priests had been invited from Australia, who conducted the complete form of worship and everyone liked it very much. I also donned the black robes, wore a silver cross around my neck and participated in the proceedings. What difference does it make? There is a difference in politics but not in religion. Read the Bible, how does it matter? It is also a good book like the *Ramayana*, it is a book of god. It does not say that one should steal and do bad things like that, does it? Then why should we not read it? Why should we not read the Koran? Are bad things written in it? Here it is written in Sanskrit and there it is written in Arabic, what difference is there?

We will also invite Maulviji here. Most people are not aware of the way in which other people worship. Everyone is ignorant. They keep criticizing each other's religion but who knows how a Muslim person offers namaz, how they offer their worship? No one knows how Christians worship. No one has seen anything, but they are quick to criticize, make rude remarks and laugh at other religions. No one knows the reality.

Yes, it is true that the maximum number of rituals are found and followed in vedic dharma and a little less is followed in Judaism. There is a lot of ritual in the Jewish faith. Islam has almost none. There is some in Christianity, but very little. They light a candle, wave incense, ring bells, but in Judaism and in vedic dharma there are many rituals.

So you will invite a Muslim priest to come here?

Yes, absolutely. I have many friends. There is no fight between religion. Look here, to say that all faiths are the same is not correct. Now the road from Munger to Deoghar and the road from Calcutta to Deoghar will definitely be different. If someone from Calcutta wants to come to Deoghar, they will surely not come via Munger. The roads must be different. Someone is stupid, someone is a fool, another one is learned, knowledgeable, someone is greedy, another one is full of avarice – there must be different roads for different people. But yes, all faiths talk of the same goal. The roads are different but the destination is one.

Satsang 22

18 December 1997

Our vedic dharma says that everyone can have different paths but the goal or destination is the same. Yes, we can be a little inflexible or adamant about following certain things. Like there are strict rules that have to be followed for performing the last rites – a new-born child is to be buried, sannnyasins and sadhus are also buried but householders are cremated, they cannot be buried. A new-born baby can be buried because its body is free from impurities, it will not pollute the ground. Sadhus and mahatmas lead pure lives; they can be buried. Even their bodies will not pollute the ground. Householders must be cremated because their bodies are not pure and if they are buried, their bodies will pollute the ground. After all, even the bodies of the dead can contain toxic or poisonous germs, isn't it? This is something scientific. Where Christianity and Islam took birth, not much wood was to be found in those parts of the world. Christianity was not born in Europe; it took birth in Israel. There are hardly any trees there, not much water either which is why they used to bury their dead in the ground. Here we have a lot of water and a lot of wood too, that is why we have the system of cremation.

Now even there they are facing shortage of space.

Yes, now they have electric crematoriums and many persons have their last rites there. In fact, people of a scientific bent of mind consider cremation to be the best option because when the dead are buried, many germs are produced and they spoil the soil. That is their opinion but in the face of religion, they cannot do very much. Anyway, in time electric

crematoriums will become the accepted norm. After some years, it will become difficult to have burials, there may even be laws against it. Now people are getting educated and that brings about a lot of change.

In some places, the bodies are exhumed after ten years or so and the bones which are collected are immersed either in the sea or in a river. But the ground cannot really be of any use, no one wishes to stay there.

Yes, no one will stay there. People say that there are ghosts in that place! That place also becomes poisonous. There are germs that come from the buried bodies. Who knows what the dead person's ailment was? That is why cremation is the best choice.

You should always remember the fact that all the carnivorous animals like the dog, tiger, cheetah only feed on herbivorous animals. They do not eat carnivorous animals. A tiger will never eat the flesh of another tiger or a cheetah. Carnivores only feed on herbivorous animals. The reason is that the bodies of meat-eating animals produce poison and they do not want to eat such animals. If a cheetah dies, a tiger will go hungry but will not eat the cheetah. He will eat a rabbit but not a dog. After all, even a tiger wants to eat pure food.

Man is essentially vegetarian. The basic diet of man is vegetarian. Man does consume meat but that is not the main diet. In the same way, even the cat is vegetarian. It should not be called carnivorous; it is considered to be part of the herbivorous family. The cat has some traces of the tiger, therefore it is attracted to meat, but cats can survive very well on a vegetarian diet. They can live on rice, rotis. If they do not get any meat at all, they can manage very well and will not be adversely affected. On the other hand, the dog is not primarily vegetarian. If you feed Alsatian dogs only vegetables, they will grow weak, fall sick and die. The cat eats fish and rats but if that is not available, it will not affect its diet.

Swamiji, can people who perform sadhana eat meat?

This depends on the body as well as on the climate. For example, places like South India, Central India and Orissa are very hot. Eating meat in such places can be harmful for the body. If it is harmful for the body, it is also harmful if you are doing sadhana. That is an undeniable fact. If you go to Europe where the temperatures drop 10 to 20 degrees below zero and the minimum temperatures can go as low as minus 30 or 40 degrees, and nothing else grows either, under such conditions, there is nothing wrong in eating meat and drinking alcohol.

The normal temperature of the physical body is about 37 degrees, that must be maintained. There is a need for more calories in the diet. Since the temperatures are quite high in India, it is possible to get by with less calories. Where it is very cold, due to a lack of calories, the body temperatures, especially for older people, will drop drastically and they can even die. In cold countries, a non-vegetarian diet becomes necessary in order to meet the requirement of calories.

As far as the connection with sadhana and diet goes, the food depends upon the country as well as the times. You can say the same in regard to food, drink and relationships. Is married life an obstacle in sadhana? The only answer to this is that one must consider the conditions of the country and the times. In ancient times, we have heard of rishis like Vasishtha, Vishwamitra, Bharadwaj and others. They were all married and had children, then how come they evolved to such spiritual heights? Later when Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya organized the sannyasa tradition of rishis and munis, why did they bring in the practice of celibacy? Why did they not continue in the manner that Vasishtha and Vishwamitra had lived? Times had changed and situations were also different.

I am going to speak frankly with you. Our scriptures and *Manusmriti* say that there is nothing wrong with meat and drink or relations between man and woman, but all this has to be seen in the context of the prevailing conditions in

society at a particular point in time. Two or three hundred years after Buddha, came the reign of Emperor Ashoka. At that time Buddhism was accepted as the national religion. Non-vegetarianism was prohibited. When the king bans non-vegetarian food, what does the populace do? They have to obey. Around the same time, Shankaracharya was born. That is why the sannysasa community became vegetarian. It is not that all sannyasins are vegetarian. Sannyasins from the Niranjani Akhara are vegetarian but the sadhus belonging to the akharas which follow Shakta tantra eat meat. Sannyasins from the Udasin Akhara are vegetarian whereas the Nagas from Juna Akhara, who live in cremation grounds are all non-vegetarian, they drink, smoke cigarettes and take ganja, there are no restrictions upon them. All this is influenced by the times and conditions in a country. If someone belongs to the scavenger or *chandala* community and they take sannayasa, what will they do? He will act according to his samskaras, conditioning. Brahmins will live according to their samskaras, being vegetarian will be easy for them, but won't it be very difficult for a *chandala*?

Our ancestors who lived in the jungles many, many centuries ago were vegetarian, they managed on a diet of fruits, tubers and roots. When there were forest fires and animals began to die, they started to eat the animals. They found it to be quite tasty and said that they could manage fairly well with it. Fruits are not always available but animals are always around. That was when non-vegetarian food became part of their diet. Man is basically vegetarian. The teeth bear testimony to this fact. The length of man's intestines is also proof of the fact that man is basically vegetarian. Herbivorous animals have long intestines whereas meat-eating animals have smaller, rounder intestines. Carnivores have special teeth which are meant for tearing flesh. We do not have that kind of teeth; our teeth are designed for chewing. Apart from this, bile or the concentration of hydrochloric acid is very low among herbivores, but in carnivores, like tigers or dogs, it is very concentrated. It is so strong that if their

bile falls on your dhoti, it will burn a hole through it. Dogs don't throw out the bones, they simply swallow the bones which are then dissolved in their stomach by the strong bile. There are three distinguishing features between herbivores and carnivores – teeth, intestines and the concentration of hydrochloric acid.

Once upon a time I had gone to Alaska and Greenland and there I stayed with Eskimos for a few days. Those people kill seals and simply hang them up from the roof inside their homes. It cooks slowly over the smoke and then they eat it. Their homes are not made of stone but from bricks of ice. The ice there is so hard that chisels and saws are used to cut it. The ice is like huge rocks which they cut or carve into bricks, those bricks are then joined together and that is how they make their houses. That ice does not melt.

Not even when they light fires?

No. It is incredible. Earlier I had only heard about this and I was not able to understand how it could be possible. When I saw it for myself, I was able to believe it. They use saws and chisels to make bricks from ice. The fires keep burning within their homes, but despite that the ice does not melt. They live in houses made from ice, they wear clothes made from wool and leather. They have a short stature and do not have beards or moustaches. Their children's cheeks are like ripe red tomatoes. They simply catch fish, the fire is burning at home, there is a grate with skewers upon it, they just leave the fish there. It cooks slowly all day, in the evening they put some salt on it and eat it. Of course, now things have changed, they also have big cities. Earlier there were only dog sleds, now they are mechanized. The streets are covered by ice. Motor cars will slip on it, that is why they have sleds, cars without wheels. It runs on a motor but it does not have wheels. It is a very cold country. When I went there, I had to wear proper warm woollen attire. They would hardly let me go there like this! If one goes there wearing a loincloth, you may end up in jail!

Can one get vegetables there?

A lot of things are imported but they also have greenhouses. Houses are made from glass and they grow tomatoes, peas, cauliflower, eggplant, many different vegetables. Science has reached there. You will find greenhouses in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and many other places.

They have central heating. All buildings and homes are centrally heated, no doors and windows are left open and it is very warm inside. The doors open and close immediately. They don't remain open, and if someone leaves a window even a little open, they have to pay a hefty penalty. They have double-glazed windows which are completely insulated. The houses there are usually built with wood and stone. As you go further north, you will find houses built from mud but they are very beautifully made. This is a very old technology but it is very effective. The houses in villages are made from mud and they are very good. They have huge wooden beams and are lovely to look at as well. The second floor is supported by wooden beams, not concrete slabs. They use a lot of wood because it holds and retains heat much longer, it does not allow the heat to escape. I did not see any cement houses there. They just have carpets or rugs on the wooden floors. The wood keeps the houses warm whereas cement gets hot very fast and loses heat equally fast.

Anyway, they have created very good facilities for their people. The citizens like law and order. The public has a lot of freedom. For example, anyone can choose to follow any faith they choose, they can opt to work in any field they wish. It's not like a king's son or the son of the president has to only have a job of a high standing. No, he can work as a cleaner in a poultry farm or sweep the streets. Women can work during the day or at night. There are no restrictions that women cannot do this kind of work or that they cannot speak with men. They also have a habit of speaking the truth and not hiding things. They smoke and drink in front of each other. They also are not closed about personal relationships. A man will tell a woman quite openly, 'I have met someone else, it would be better if we separate.'

They are honest when it comes to shops and business as well. Once when I was on my way back from South America, I had a stopover in Frankfurt and stayed in a hotel. When I got to the room, I took off my warm overcoat and draped it across the back of a chair. Unfortunately, while leaving I forgot that overcoat and left it behind. I only realized it when I was in the airplane and thought, 'Okay, what can I do now? I will find another one somewhere else.' After six months, I happened to return to the same hotel and I mentioned the date of my last visit and the number of the room I had occupied. My coat was there, safe and sound! It had been dry-cleaned and placed in the Lost and Found department along with my passport number, even after six months. They have a high sense of responsibility and are very conscious of their duties. I always stayed in five-star hotels during my travels. All my belongings used to be in the room and I would ask for it to be cleaned while I was out. On my return, not a single thing would be missing and the room was spotlessly clean.

There is no such thing as honesty, this is what I believe. Honesty is a gift of certain situations. If you start a factory or a business here, why do the managers, workers or other employees cheat you? Because your system, your organization is faulty. Honesty is created by the presence of a system. I do not believe that people are honest. A person who is a little slow-witted, not very intelligent, yes, he may be honest, but I am not willing to believe that an intelligent, sharp man is honest. An infallible system is what makes honesty possible. You run a multinational company, the head office is in America and the factory could be in Hong Kong. How does their work run smoothly? Because of an efficient system and organization. Those people create a particular way of working, a system which runs well. All the work happens according to rules and processes which are well-thought out and well managed. Only then can the work take place in the right manner. Honesty is spawned by a good system but there is rampant dishonesty here because we just do not have any systems in place. There the systems are water-tight and

because of those systems, people have to be honest. If they are not, they are punished by the system.

In earlier times, there was honesty in India, but in recent times the situation has worsened.

Earlier people were honest because they did not have recourse to any other path. Otherwise, why should they be dishonest if there is no need to be that way? Man was not greedy, he was not avaricious, so why should he be dishonest? A man becomes dishonest when he is greedy.

The real reason is that in India, workers and servants are very poorly paid. Who can survive on five or six hundred rupees a month? The man who is a rickshaw driver in Deoghar probably earns about thirty rupees a day. He has to support his wife and children on that meagre sum.

Should the government do something? If they pass laws, then people will have to obey them.

No, what can the government do? Do the people follow the law?

If everyone raised their voice against this, wouldn't something be possible, Swamiji?

Everyone knows what is required. Who doesn't know about all this in India? I am not saying anything new. Everyone knows that salaries are very low, but what will you do? Everyone knows the facts, but the questions also arise that the common labourers are also not very capable! When we had just come to live here, we wanted to get the walls white-washed. The man who came to do the job ended up with as much paint on himself as what went on the walls! Eventually we found a professional painter who knew how to do the job properly, meaning that he was a proficient worker, he knew how to do the job. So, this professional way of working, is it present in our society?

Satsang 23

21 December 1997

Swamiji, please bless us.

Only God can bestow blessings. Man can only wish another well. Each person is the recipient of god's grace and blessings. God blesses everyone. After a lot of time has gone by and when you look back at life, you will find that whatever happens in a person's life and whatever has already happened is something that was already pre-destined and pre-determined. There are many people who speak about *purushartha*, the effort one makes in life, but in reality everything that happens in life has already been written. Who writes, why it is written? These are very complicated questions and there is really no point in pondering upon them or pontificating about them either.

When I look back and review all the years of my life so far, only one realization stands out – that I have not done anything myself. Whatever I did was only done because it was something that was meant to be done at that particular point in time. When one is in the first flush of youth, that is not how one thinks and perhaps for one's psychological growth, perhaps one should not think like that either. At that time, one is driven by *purushartha*, the will to do perform different actions. Later when one reflects deeper upon the matter and reviews one's life in an objective manner, that is when one comes to this realization. Whether you believe in god or not, that does not matter, both will do fine. There is one irrefutable fact that whatever I have done in my life so far is only what was meant to be accomplished, nothing more. When this is the truth, then I cannot understand why man

breaks his head over all this. People do this because there is no belief in this fact of destiny.

Where man comes from and where he goes, no amount of planning makes any difference. I had absolutely no intention of coming here to Rikhia. I wanted to retire, that's all. In Rishikesh my guru's ashram is a very big place, they would have happily given me a little hut somewhere. I have a small cave in Gangotri, which is still unoccupied to this day. I could easily have gone there. I came here and settled down. The decision to come here was taken only four days prior to my coming here whereas the option of going to Gangotri was there for many months or even years. The choice of going to Rishikesh was also open to me for many years but it did not come through. A decision that was taken only four days before was what got approved! These things are not easy to understand.

Man must always have a clear understanding of his place and position. Forget about eternal everlasting space, just take a look at our own solar system. What is the position of our humble planet earth in the scheme of the solar system? On that planet, what place does your country India have? In that country, what is the position of your Munger or Deoghar? In that Deoghar, where is Rikhia? In that Rikhia, where does my little house figure and in that little house, what is my position? It is not even a little speck and yet my 'Me' is so big! Like electrons which buzz around in an atom, man's existence in this world is even less than that. As one has sown, so shall one reap. One will find it in this life and also in the next life. If one has done some good, you will find a guru; if one has done wrong, then who knows? Even in the next life, you may not have that good fortune. Who can tell?

Bhakti

I have forgotten all about yoga. I do not have any opinion about what other people think either because I have seen that people will only do that which they wish to do. There is no point in exhausting oneself trying to prevent them from doing things. Ever since I have come here, it has been my

untiring and relentless effort to cut myself off from all streams of thought, ideas and principles and only connect with bhakti. Yoga has gone very far away from me now. I have forgotten the names of many asana and pranayama practices and I have even forgotten the names of many people with whom I have worked in the field of yoga. The memory of many faces is getting fainter. Now my whole attention and leaning is towards bhakti. I wish to focus all my feelings, ideas and actions only on establishing and enhancing bhakti. Bhakti has a very straightforward meaning for me. I am the servant and He is my master. Whatever He says, that is what I will do. If He wishes that I should leave this body, I am absolutely ready for it. If it is His wish that I should fulfil some other instruction that he may give me, then why not?

My way of thinking is totally different now. There is no mooladhara or sahasrara chakra anymore, no ida, pingala or sushumna. My path is very simple. Once a year I come out to meet the villagers and celebrate the wedding of Sita and Rama. It may well be something that is beyond the understanding of many learned people and scholars – how come a sannyasin of the Dashnami order is celebrating the marriage of Sita and Rama? But this is a matter of great joy for me. I am undoubtedly incapable of reconciling the lower and higher minds, but I feel great joy at the marriage of Sita and Rama, I can certainly experience that.

What I was unable to experience while expounding the scriptures of different philosophies, yoga or meditation is what I am able to experience through the feelings which I have during this wedding of Sita and Rama. Sita and Rama are not the man and woman whom I can see before me but I can experience them. Though they are not in front of me, the joy which I am able to experience just by evoking their forms which are so dear to me – is something impossible to describe in words! It is simply magical. Not just for me but for others as well. This year the entire panchayat showed up for the wedding. From far and wide, people came bearing gifts for Sitaji. I must have distributed over six hundred bridal gift kits. The clothes and

jewellery in each kit would not have been worth less than thirty to forty thousand rupees. These folks love gold jewellery.

The truth is not that which you can see but the truth is that which is not visible to the naked eye. Truth is not that which you can see with your eyes or what you can think about in your mind, but it is that which you can experience through your feelings. It is because of feelings that some woman is your wife. Your relationship with your wife is true, it is real because it is based on feelings. It is feelings which bring forward the truth of things to us, not philosophies or sensory perceptions. It is because of feelings that your son calls you father. Feelings are what make reality, it is feelings which create reality and truth. Such truth based on feelings is essential in life.

That is why now my path is totally different. I do not care what people think about me or what they say about me. I only wish to progress along the path of bhakti.

Mirabai

Mira was a very great bhakta and saint. From early childhood, she was completely immersed in her love for god. When she grew up, she was married to the prince of Chittoor. At that time, Chittoor was one of the powerful states in Western India. Somehow that did not fructify because since her childhood she believed that her husband was Krishna. For her, this was her truth. Other people were unwilling and unable to accept or understand this. For them, her husband was the prince of Chittoor to whom she was married. People's understanding and thoughts were limited to the body and what was perceivable by the senses. Where was Krishna in all this? They even tried to kill Mira but not even a hair on her head was harmed. She left Chittoor and came to Mathura-Vrindavan. After staying there for quite a long time, she came to Dwarka. She must have faced so many hardships. In those days for a young woman from a royal family to abandon her home, go to Mathura-Vrindavan – people used to call her a mad woman. But was she mad? Even today, the whole world sings her songs and poems. So how can she be called mad?



Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati came to the remote village of Rikhia (Jharkhand) in 1989 after entering a new phase of his spiritual life. Here he performed intense austerities, exemplifying the highest principles of the sannyasa tradition which is a beacon of inspiration for future generations. In 2007, Sri Swamiji established Rikhiapeeth in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru Swami Sivananda to 'serve, love and give.' He entered into mahasamadhi at midnight on 5th December 2009, epitomizing the highest accomplishment of yoga.

Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 5 is a collection of talks given by Sri Swamiji in November and December 1997. He speaks on a variety of subjects including rural development, social and political systems, children's education, upliftment of the poor, emancipation of women, ancient and modern history, science, culture, spirituality, bhakti and different religious, social and sannyasa traditions. Translated from the original Hindi, Sri Swamiji's liberal, compassionate, realistic and practical views provide inspiration and fresh insight to all individuals seeking answers of how to deal with the modern age and for the expansion of mind.



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